SHAKESPEARE'S

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

WITH

Introduction, Explanations, Paraphrase, Marginal Notes Etc., Etc.

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RAM LAL SURI
"THE STUDENTS' OWN AGENCY"
LAHORE.

Printed by Mr. P. N. Rampal at the Washington
Works Ganpat Road, Anarkali, Lahore

AND

Published by Satwant Lal Suri, B A. for "The
Own Agency" Anarkali, Lahore.

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INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Those who read a few of Shakespeare's great plays naturally desire to learn the life history of the Dramatist, and when they are told the meagre story of his life, they are surprised that only so little should be known about so great a man. Here we have an ordinary lad, poor and poorly educated, who goes to London, works for his living as an actor in a theatre, then begins to write plays, and in a few years attains success, and finally turns out to be the greatest dramatist of his age. Beyond this broad outline we know but very little about Shakespeare's life. Of the friends he had, the books he read, the parts he played in the theatre and of the many other things about which we are curious we have yet no knowledge.

In spite of the stupendous labour that has been put in and the strenuous efforts that have been made to discover more facts regarding the life of Shakespeare, we have to remain content with the meagre materials without any authentic account of his life-history. We have to fill in the gaps out of our own imagination and say "perhaps" he thought this and "possibly" he did that. It is mainly an atmosphere of guess-work, though illumined by occasional flashes of history.

But there may be some who care little for the life history of Shakespeare. They would sit in a cosy room, lie in an arm-chair, and enjoy reading his plays, without

bothering themselves in the least about the man William Shakespeare. They simply enjoy his wonderful creations, laugh with Falstaff, ponder over the character of Othello and Hamlet, take delight in his beautiful lyrics and his wealth of dramatically-expressed thoughts, and totally disregard all the idle buzz about him—whether the Stratford bust is anything like him, whether he was rich or poor, whether he was of dark complexion or of a fair colour, whether he was tall or middle-sized, whether he and his wife got on well together, and so on. But such an attitude cannot last long; we are compelled to seek to know something about the man who has given us those striking comedies and tragedies, and often enough we wish to find out if any of the sentiments expressed in the plays were held by Shakespeare personally.

The activities of those who make biographical researches are not without value if they do not trump up a story out of their own fancy and try to supplement the few facts known with many things which ought to have been or might have been, but for which there is no authority. Unfortunately the biographers and commentators of Shakespeare have sometimes forgotten Shakespeare himself, while chasing the phantoms and illusions of their own feverish brain. But at the same time, it cannot be denied that while engaged in this wild-goose chase, some of the critics have stumbled upon vital truths. These truths have helped us in enlarging our knowledge of Shakespeare's life and doings, though they have resulted often in the accumulation of idle gossip.

Shakespeare's life may briefly be divided into three periods :—

(*a*) Life at Stratford-on-Avon (1564—1587)

(*b*) Life in London (1587—1610)

(*c*) The return to Stratford-on-Avon (1610—1616).

We shall discuss these various stages one by one.

(*a*) Life at Stratford-on-Avon

Birth and parentage.

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon, in Warwickshire. As he was baptised on April 26th, it is not improbable that the tradition which assigns his birth to April 23rd, the feast-day of St. George, the patron saint of England, is correct.

There is good reason to suppose that William Shakespeare's ancestors were farmers. The poet's father John Shakespeare was not only a prosperous man of business, but also a person of importance in the municipal affairs of Stratford. He occupied for one year "the highest office in the corporation gift, that of bailiff ;" he afterwards became Chief Alderman. He married Mary Arden who brought him land and horses, as she belonged to a rich family. But she was apparently without education and could not even sign her name. In 1564, he was in quite prosperous circumstances but in 1578 we find him borrowing money. The next year he fell into debt and difficulties, was obliged to sell some of his wife's property, and gradually lost all interest in municipal affairs. From this brief record of his career it appears that John Shakespeare fell on evil

days. His son could have helped him little in his difficulties because he had married at the age of eighteen a woman eight years senior to him. Moreover, he had three children by this marriage, so that at the age of twenty-two he was obliged to migrate to London, leaving his family meanwhile at Stratford in straitened circumstances.

His education.

He was entitled to free tuition at the Grammar School of Stratford, where he was taught the rudiments of Latin grammar and literature. Later on somehow he contrived to know a little more Latin, some Greek, and probably some French and Italian. The tradition which tells us that he had "small Latin and less Greek" is substantially true, though not literally so. His time at school was short, as his father's fortunes steadily declined. At the age of thirteen he was obliged to give up his studies and to apply himself to the trade of a butcher, which was then the only means by which his father earned a living.

His marriage.

Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway who lived in her cottage—a thatched cottage which stood at some distance from Stratford. He married her when he was hardly eighteen and a half years old, while his wife's age is speculated to have been twenty-six years. She received a marriage portion of about £6. 13s. 4d. which in these days would be equal to about eight times that amount. It is believed that their married life was not altogether happy. Three children were born to them, two daughters and a son.

Meanwhile William Shakespeare had to struggle hard for his livelihood.

Early life at Stratford.

His early life at Stratford may be called eventless, except for incidents connected with such activities as deer-stealing in which he is said to have taken part. It is believed that he used to join other farmers in stealing deer and rabbits from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy, an offence for which the punishment in those days was three months' imprisonment, and the payment of three times the amount of damage done. According to one tradition, Shakespeare, it is said, resented the cruel treatment meted out to him, and in revenge composed a ballad on the subject and pasted it on the walls of the park. This naturally incensed Thomas Lucy, and led to Shakespeare's further prosecution and resulted in his leaving his home for London. But this is only a tradition.

According to another tradition, it is said that in 1887 two companies of actors, the Queen's and Lord Leicester's, returned to London from a tour in the provinces, and so his attention was turned to the stage. Two other Companies were performing at Stratford the same year, and it is highly probable that he might have picked up acquaintance with some of the strolling players—especially Henslowe who later became an important figure in the theatrical world of Queen Elizabeth's days—and might have longed to go to London. Whichever of the two accounts given above may be true, the fact remains that he found his way to London. When or why he went there and what he was doing between 1585 and 1592 we do not

know. In 1592 we find him in London, already exciting the jealousy of older writers.

(*b*) Life in London

Shakespeare was not more than twenty-two when he came to London. It is idle to speculate on the manner in which he first tried to make a living on his arrival in London; we have no definite information on the subject. He may have followed some humble occupation in the beginning. He settled down in London to carve out a career for himself. Soon he entered the world of actors, adopted the profession of an actor, and in this profession he made his earliest reputation. His career as a writer began by his adapting and revising the plays of other authors. When once a play was bought by the acting Company, the author had no more claim on it. The Manager of the Company little cared for thorough revision, hence we find the presence of inconsistencies and certain improbabilities in the revised plays.

Although this revision of other men's work may have enabled Shakespeare to master the secrets of successful play-writing, the greatness achieved by him as a dramatist cannot be explained by it. How is it that he could exercise that alchemist's power which could transmute base materials into glittering gold ?

This is the wonder of wonders, and it still remains to be explained. He does not, like Milton, seem to have gone through a period of patient study and meditation before the Muse could come to him and dictate the

faultless numbers. How could he then produce literary miracles like *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Lear* and *Macbeth*, which reveal his marvellous insight into human nature, his great command over language, his masterly handling of blank verse, his lofty reaches of thought and reflection and his mastery of dramatic technique? Surely, it was not meditation and study that brought him these things; but they came to him as naturally and spontaneously as leaves are born on trees. London was before him; he observed its men and women, their manners and their walks of life and these brought him that knowledge of life with which he has stuffed his various plays. He lived his life intensely, if we may so put it, and he kept his eyes and ears open. But above all he was gifted, as few others have been gifted, with the capacities needed for great poetry.

We must say that he happened to live at a particularly happy time. "In the closing years of the sixteenth century the life of England ran high. The revival of learning had enriched the national mind with the store of new ideas and images; the reformation of religion had been accomplished, and its fruits were now secure; three conspiracies against the Queen's life had recently been foiled, and her rival, the Queen of Scots, had perished on the scaffold; the huge attempt of Spain against the independence of England had been defeated by the gallantry of English seamen, aided by the winds of heaven. English explorers were exploring untravelled lands and distant oceans; English citizens were growing in wealth and importance; the farmers made the soil give up twice its former yield, the nobility, however fierce their private feuds and rivalries might be, gathered round the Queen as their centre. It was

felt that England was a power in the continent of Europe··· ···All these things met the eyes of Shakespeare: they supplied him with food for reflection. He was in the very heart of the bustle and stir of life; and he was naturally impressed with men, things, and events. London therefore gave him a varied experience, widened his outlook on life, broadened his sympathies, and imparted to him a knowledge of living men and women."

(c) The return to Stratford

It is possible that Shakespeare used to visit Stratford occasionally, but about the year 1611 he seems to have left London for good and lived in retirement at Stratford, though still keeping an interest in his friends in London. Already in 1597 Shakespeare had bought New Place, one of the largest houses in Stratford, for £ 60— then a large amount. He seems to have been considered a wealthy man at that time. His father had applied to the Herald's College for the right to assume a coat of arms as a gentleman, and had got the right in 1599 or so. In 1602 Shakespeare purchased 107 acres of arable land at Stratford. These and other transactions show that by 1610 or 1611, when he seems to have retired from the theatrical world, he was a man of means.

He had every inducement to retire; his father had died in 1603; in 1607 his eldest daughter Susanna had married; his mother had died in 1608. His only son Hamnet had died much earlier. The return to Stratford must have meant a great change. "The change was great

from the streets of London, the noisy theatres, the brilliant wit-combats at the Mermaid tavern, to the peaceful retreat, the wife whom he had loved as a boy—now grown elderly, his daughter's little girls, by this time running about and talking, and, encircling these, the quiet fields and hills and the brimming river."

Shakespeare's younger daughter Judith married on 20th February, 1616. Soon after he became dangerously ill; a draft will which he had made in January of that year was revised and signed by him on the 25th of March. By this will New Place and most of his property went to Susanna. Judith got some cash and some silver. His wife was given his second-best bed with its furniture. (She was legally entitled to a third share of the free-hold estates.) Various small bequests were made to friends in London and at Stratford.

Shakespeare died on 23rd April, 1616, and was buried in the chancel of the Stratford church on the 25th. Over the grave there is the following verse crudely inscribed:

GOOD FRIEND FOR IESUS SAKE FORBEARE
TO DIGG THE DUST ENCLOASED HEARE:
BLEST BE YE MAN YT SPARES THES STONES,
AND CURST BE HE YT MOVES MY BONES.

SHAKESPEARE AS A DRAMATIST

1. The Plays

The plays of Shakespeare were collected together for the first time in 1623 by his actor friends Heminge and Condell. The plays are divided into Comedies, Histories

and Tragedies. The exact dates of composition of these plays are not definitely known in all cases, and perhaps will never be. The following is a list of the plays ascribed to Shakespeare, with their approximate dates :—

Before 1595.	Henry VI (revision of other men's work).
	Richard III (part only).
	Titus Andronicus (touched up).
	The Comedy of Errors.
	The Two Gentlemen of Verona.
1595—1597.	Love's Labour's Lost.
	A Midsummer-Night's Dream.
	Romeo and Juliet.
	King John.
	The Taming of the Shrew (in part ?).
	Richard II.
	The Merchant of Venice.
1598—1600.	Henry IV. Part I.
	Henry IV. Part II.
	The Merry Wives of Windsor (in part ?).
	Much Ado About Nothing.
	Henry V.
	As You Like It.
	Twelfth Night.
	Julius Cæsar.
1601—1604.	Hamlet.
	Troilus and Cressida.
	All's Well that Ends Well (final form ?).
	Measure for Measure.
	Othello.

1605—1608. Macbeth.
King Lear.
Antony and Cleopatra.
Timon of Athens (only in part).
Coriolanus.
Pericles (only in part).

1609—1613. Cymbeline.
The Winter's Tale.
The Tempest
Henry VIII (part only).

The Chronological order of Shakespeare's plays as we now have it is the result of the persistent labours of many critics in the nineteenth century. The value of the discovery of the chronological order in which Shakespeare wrote his plays is that it enables us to trace the development of Shakespeare's art. He began by tinkering upon old plays and chronicles, and borrowing other men's romances. Even till the last he was not chary of borrowing plots and material from others, nor did he have scruples about repeating his own ideas and methods. In the early plays there is an exuberance of poetry, and a delight in playing with words and phrases. This gift of magnificent poetic utterance remained with him to the last, though as he advanced he subordinated his poetry to his dramatic purpose. Indeed, it is hardly fair or just to think of Shakespeare merely as a great dramatist ; he is a supremely great poet as well.

In the earlier plays there is a cleverness which is very noticeable. The cleverness does not consist merely in the verbal jokes and puns ; we see it also in the arrangement of

the plots, in the parodies that some of these plays contain, and in the situations themselves. We also notice that in the earlier plays there is a very great proportion of rhyming lines compared to blank lines. The quantity of prose in the early plays is very slight. In the later plays, however, rhyme is not made use of, except very rarely; there is a much greater proportion of prose. Blank verse now takes the place of rhyming lines, and the blank verse of the later plays is different from the blank verse of the earlier plays. The blank verse of the later period has a large proportion of weak or feminine endings, so that the lines run on into the next lines. The poetry of the later plays is therefore closer to spoken language—we may almost describe it as magnificent prose—though this poetry is more compelling and more fraught with imagination than any ordinary prose or poetry could be.

This development in Shakespeare's style and manner is such an important and noticeable factor that style is taken an an evidence of the lateness or otherwise of any given play.

Although it is interesting and valuable to study the development of Shakespeare's dramatic aud poetic art as seen in the plays arranged in a more or less chronological order, many a critic has been fascinated by what appears (to a person so inclined) to be a revelation of Shakespeare's personal life and point of view in his plays. Thus some critics have been led to believe that through the plays we can trace the personal experiences of Shakespeare, that he wrote light-hearted comedies when he was a gay young man tasting to the full the joys of London life, that he wrote tragedies as

a result of tragic experiences in his own private life. It is undoubtedly true that a writer draws from his own experiences; but a playwright writes with an eye to popular tastes and fancies, and of a dramatist who has written both dark tragedies and bright comedies it is hardly possible to say merely from the evidence of the plays themselves that he held even temporarily either a tragic or a comic view of life. We know for a fact that Shakespeare in his private life did not despise such common-place things as buying and selling, building houses and acquiring property. The artist is not as great as his art. To read in the plays of Shakespeare an account of his personal life is to go very wide of the mark. But it will not be far wrong to say that in his plays Shakespeare gives us of the fullness of his life and his experience. He may or may not have personally experienced tragedy; but he had surely watched the spectacle of human suffering. His own life may or may not have been peculiarly gay: but he had seen mirth and merry-making. He was never, as far as we know, mad, and he did not go into the streets begging; but he had seen madness of various kinds, and he had seen beggars

The plays of Shakespeare are among the most priceless of the heritages of the English people. New light is being shed on the plays as the years go by, and it is possible that future generations may have a far fuller knowledge of Shakespeare's life and work than what we possess to-day. And as knowledge increases admiration increases too. Truly did Ben Jonson say that though Shakespeare was the soul of the age "He was not of an age but for all time".

2. Nature of the Shakespearean Drama

Shakespeare's dramas form the mirror in which almost every phase of the life of the age is reflected. The readers will find therein references to particular details like the craze and fashion prevailing at that time and also to the broad, general characteristics of the national life.

Shakespeare knew full well the taste of his audience. He felt their pulse at every step. He realised the necessity of dealing with familiar themes—themes at once so well-known and charming to the audience as to attract their attention.

Travelling was the rage of the day, and Italy was the goal of those who desired to acquire a finish in education and fashion. Rosalind makes fun of Jaques : 'Wear strange suits, disable all the benefits of your own country ; be out of love with your nativity ; or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola!" In *Richard II*, York says that the king always listens with rapt attention to the,

> "Report of fashions in proud Italy,
> "Whose manners still our tardy apish nation
> "Limps after in base imitation."

Love's Labour's Lost (1591) is a social satire dealing with the fashions and fads of the day. Euphuism and extravagance in dress are derided with the sharpness of a Bernard Shaw. The Elizabethan pedant figures amusingly in Holofernes, who has been "at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps." Nor do we miss references to current fashions in the speeches of Hotspur. He cleverly hints at the velvet guards on the dress of fashionable city ladies.

The historical plays too mirror forth the Elizabethan life. Eastcheap, the haunt of Prince Hall and Falstaff, abounds in taverns of Shakespeare's day : there was no "Boar's Head" in the time of Henry IV. The fashions in dress for men and women are commented on and described in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Various Elizabethan games and customs are depicted in the play. Nor do we miss perpetual references to Queen Elizabeth. 'The fair vestal throned by the west,' 'The painted May-pole', 'St. Valentine's Day,' and 'Ninemen's morris'......are the various things of interest in the play. The elaborate ritual of Court life is depicted with wonderful mastery in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

The Elizabethan audience believed whole-heartedly in the existence of good and bad spirits. Superstition had not yet entirely died out of Elizabethan England. People believed in ghosts and witches, fairies and elves. They were believed to exercise a sort of mysterious or supernatural influence upon the minds of the people, upon their actions and doings. Hence we find that in some of Shakespeare's plays the supernatural plays an important part. He introduced witches in *Macbeth* and a ghost in *Hamlet*. In *Julius Cæsar* we hear of the dreadful portents before Cæsar's death :

"Ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets."

"We look upon *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* merely as charming fantasies ; but the fairy world in the wood near Athens, the spirits that obey the behest of Prospero, were as real to many of Shakespeare's audience as Helena and Lysander, Miranda and Ferdinand. And I feel sure that it was not Prospero the philosophic recluse,

but Prospero the magician, who appealed primarily to the Elizabethans." In short, superstition was everywhere. The London hostel, the wayside inn, the merchant's palace as well as the shepherd's cottage, was alive with omens and portents of "presages and tongues of heaven." In all these matters Shakespeare was of his age. The whole of the Elizabethan England seems to be mirrored in his plays.

Though Shakespeare is a typical Elizabethan, he has a universal aspect too. He was of his age: but he was also of the ages. There is an imperishable element in his plays. Shakespeare will live for all time because of his dramatic power, and even more surely because of his incomparable poetry and his wonderful insight into human nature. Shakespeare himself declared, "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme."

"He touches every mood : of graceful sentiment, as in the romantic comedies ; of delicate fantasy, as in the fairy plays ; of philosophic meditation, as in the tragedies of the mid-period ; and of poignant passion, as in the later tragedies. In the verse that bodies forth such primal things as love, hate, hope, despair, courage, endurance, Shakespeare towers above his fellows. When we think of Lear in his desolation, of Othello in his last anguish, of Macbeth in his soul's agony, and the despair of Cleopatra—we think of English literature at its grandest." It is by his sane and healthy outlook on life and by his great power of character-portrayal that Shakespeare has endeared himself to humanity.

No one can doubt his insight into human character. Portia, Rosalind, Beatrice, Cleopatra, Juliet, are startlingly

modern. Place them beside the women of Sheridan or Goldsmith. What a world of difference do we find? How dated and ancient appear the latter; how fresh and alive appear the former. Beside them even the women of Dickens and Thackeray seem old-fashioned. And the reason is that Shakespeare's women have the primal qualities of womanhood common to every age, and therefore can never date. Who can forget the beautiful words of Helena:—

"We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
We should be woo'd and were not made to woo."

Again: "The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be changed:
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild wind
Makes speed to catch the tiger; bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valour flies."

Here is a conversation between Rosalind and Orlando. Age cannot wither it, nor can time make it stale.

Rosalind. I pray you, what is it o'clock?

Orlando. You should ask me what time o' day: there's no clock in the forest.

Rosalind. Then there is no true lover in the forest; else sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detest the lazy foot of time as well as a clock.

And there is subtlety no less than realism. Mark with that masterly touches the figure of rash, hot-tempered Harry Percy is drawn. How impatient he is about the medical advice on the field of battle:

"He made me mad
To see him shine so brisk and smell so sweet
And talk so like a waiting gentlewoman
Of guns, drums and wounds—God save the mark:
And telling me, the sovereign'st thing on earth
Was parmaceti for an inward bruise!"

Prince Henry characterises him in pleasantly humorous fashion:

"I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the North; he that kills me with some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands and says to his wife, 'Fie upon this quiet life; I won't work!' 'O my sweet Henry,' says she, 'how many hast thou killed to-day?' 'Give my roan horse a drench,' says he, and answers, 'Some fourteen,' an hour after: 'a trifle—a trifle.'"

In *Richard II* Shakespeare has drawn a contrast between the sentimental and weak-willed king Richard and the strong-willed and subtle Bolingbroke. It was only in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* that Shakespeare was not interested in making much distinction of character between Demetrius and Lysander. They are little more than a first lover and a second lover. Nor is Helena distinguishable from Hermia by much else than that in person she is the taller of the two and the gentler in disposition.

One point remains to be considered. There is a charge levelled against Shakespeare that he was essentially undemocratic and hated the mob. According to one critic, *Coriolanus* is a "mine of insults" against the people. Dr. Furnival says, "Shakespeare used the poor rather as material for fun to amuse his richer patrons with, than as folk with whom he felt. He does not show much sympathy with them—not so

much as Chaucer, I think—but his representations of them are all in good part, and like those of Chaucer and Dickens, make his hearers think kindly of the men they laugh at."

Shakespeare had no liking for the rough, uneducated mob. He was a man of sensitive feelings. He appreciated breeding and culture. Brutality and ignorance he hated heartily with Elizabethan frankness. It is extremely unjust and wrong on the part of the critics to call *Coriolanus* "a mine of insults". It seems, rather, to be a plain unvarnished picture which displays the fickleness and brutality of a mob. But Shakespeare was alive also to the virtues and merits of the people at large. His Henry IV is a sufficient proof. To say that Shakespeare did not sympathise with the poor in their sufferings is to charge him with brutality and heartlessness. Want of sympathy with the poor in their sufferings can be found nowhere. Who can miss the beautiful passage in *Lear*—so remarkable for its poignant sympathy—which reveals Shakespeare's knowledge of the feelings of wretches and his sense of the fitness of things :

"Take physic, pomp ;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st sake the super-flux to them
And show the heavens more just."

Or take a comedy—*As You Like It*. You will notice how admirably the rustics hold their own against the aristocrats.

"It is quite probable that in those days when the man of letters was dependent on a patron, and when it was the custom to heap meaningless adulation on the sovereign, Shakespeare was no better than his fellows.................

He was not a paragon of virtue ; he had his weaknesses both as a man and as an artist. But the marvel is that typifying as he does the greatness and the defects of his age and generation, he should so far transcend his time as to speak to us to-day —at any rate to those of us who have ears to hear, despite our changes of thought and shifting of ideals—with an even greater compelling power than in his day and generation."

3. Shakespeare's Creative Force

His Characters.

Besides his variety, the most wonderful gift that the poet possessed was that he could endow historical and imaginary beings with life. He enlivened with flesh and blood the dry bones of his historical personages. This power he possessed to a high degree. So spontaneous, so natural, so easy was his gift that his characters do not give the immpression of effort on the part of the dramatist. It is here that Shakespeare can be said to have portrayed his characters with a pencil tipped with the divine fire of imagination. From the beginning there is life everywhere, but as he advanced towards maturity his characters came to be more boldly outlined and more complex. *Richard II* presents a sharp contrast between the too imaginative King Richard and the clever and subtle Bolingbroke. 'The first important comic figure is undoubtedly Bottom in *Mid-summer-Night's Dream*, but the clown Launce in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and the Dromios in *The Comedy of Errors* had previously made good their claim to droll originality.' From 1593 onwards, there are very few characters in Shakespeare's plays that do not bear the stamp of his

creative genius, that do not exhibit the vital spark and the distinctive mark of his individuality. Each of them lives, breathes, and moves, and has the spark of real life. Who can miss the names of Capulet, Tybalt, the cynical Mercuto, Friar Laurence...what a galaxy of living characters in *Romeo and Juliet*! Multiply them by thirty-six, the numbers of his plays, and we realise what a host of living characters issued from the imagination of Shakespeare. It is in this respect that Shakespeare is supremely great. 'His contemporaries have written scattered scenes, as animated, as tragic, comic, or poetic as his, but when the total number of the persons to whom they have ensured immortality is counted, it is questionable whether all of these, collected from all their plays, would counterbalance those in a single great Shakespearean play.'

Not only did Shakespeare give life and animation to his characters, he also made them true to life. The characters of other Elizabethan dramtists are often excessive, inhuman, arbitrary, or theatrical. They surprise and terrify us but do not always convince. That is not the case with Shakespeare. In the feelings of Shakespeare's characters we recognise our own ; we 'live, breathe and move with them ;' we take part in their weal and woe ; we sympathise with them in their sufferings ; we rejoice with them in their prosperity.

"Shakespeare's characters, whether good or bad, whether moving among the realities of history or among the most romantic happenings, have an unfailing humanity which makes them plausible and keeps them within the orbit of our sympathy."

Greatness of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare 'represents real life. His dramas teach as life teaches—neither less nor more. He builds his fabrics as nature does, on right or wrong; but he does not struggle to make Nature more systematic than she is. In the subtle interflow of good and evil—in the unmerited sufferings of innocence—in the disproportion of penalties to desert—in the seeming blindness with which justice, in attempting to assert itself, overwhelms innocent and guilty in a common ruin—Shakespeare is true to real experience. The mystery of life he leaves as he finds it; and in his most tremendous positions, he is addressing rather the emotions than the understanding—knowing well that the understanding in such things is at fault, and the sage as ignorant as the child. Only the highest order of genius can represent nature thus.'

Cibber and others, as we know, wanted to alter Shakespeare. The French King, in '*Lear*', was to be got rid of; Cordelia was to marry Edgar, and Lear himself was to be rewarded for his sufferings by a golden old age. They could not bear that Hamlet should suffer for the sins of Claudius. The wicked King was to die, and the wicked mother; and Hamlet and Ophelia were to make a match of it and live happy ever after. A common novelist would have arranged it thus; and we might have had our comfortable moral that wickedness is fully punished and virtue has its due reward, and all would have been well. But Shakespeare would nat have it so. Shakespeare knew that crime was not so simple in its consequences, or Providence so paternal. He was contented to take the truth from life; and the effect of his plays upon the mind is infinitely greater

than that of the most correct theory of what life ought to be.

Shakespeare in his plays.

Though the change from comedies to tragedies and from tragedies to comedies again was for the most part the result of changes in the popular taste, all Shakespeare's great tragedies derive their power and vitality from the personal experience of the dramatist ; though the materials of the plots may have been borrowed, the characters are the poet's own ; and it is the poet's marvellous insight that impresses his readers. The underlying inspiration has been founded upon experience of life. "Shakespeare has known what it was to feel the intellectual paralysis that comes from sensitive, probing introspection, he has been torn by the cruel devastation of jealousy ; has tasted the bitterness of ingratitude among those he had reckoned his friends ; has been brought a face to face with those obstinate questioning of the Why and Whether that meet us in *Hamlet*." The form and texture of the plays reflect the creative imagination of the supreme artist. But the spirit that runs through the masterly utterances of his characters is surely something born of the unique experience of the dramatist.

His life was full, rich and varied. He had tasted the bitter fruit of adverse circumstances of life ; he had also enjoyed the sunshine and cheerfulness of the work-a-day world. He had faced the facts of life, looked the world straight in the face and wrung from its harshest moments inspirations for future travellers. And that is why Shakespeare's utterances are full of life, are full of fire and energy,

force and strength and animation such as no other dramatist could give.

His work shows the gradual development of his genius. He begins with high-spirited comedy. Then he gradually passes to fantastic romance. The third step that he takes is to give the world those English chronicle plays which show his increasing power of characterisation and his firm grasp of the concrete realities of life. "In his earlier work there is only one tragedy—*Romeo and Juliet*—and that is essentially a young man's tragedy; beautiful in its lyric poignancy yet far inferior in imaginative intensity to the group of great tragedies. The later plays are marked by swiftness and vehemence of thought and expression. But though his tragedies stir the springs of pity and terror within us, they do not depress our vitality. Why is this? Shakespeare, I think, never loses faith in human nature. Though Goneril and Regan are described who have stung Lear yet there is Cordelia—the very embodiment of self-sacrifice, love and affection. Such is the greatness of Shakespeare that he is above either praise or blame. He leaves the earth unseen, with the magic power of his imagination and fades far away into the ethereal regions where 'Peace and Beauty' dwell, where music, moonlight and feeling are one."

"No other literature, whatever its beauty, does not seem monotonous after Shakespeare. Free of every theory, accepting all of life, rejecting nothing, writing the real and the poetic, appealing to the most various men, to a rude workman as to a wit, Shakespeare's drama is a great river of life and beauty. All who thirst for art or truth, the comic or the tender, ecstasy or satire, light or shade, can

stoop to drink from its waters, and at almost every instant of their changing moods find the one drop to slake their thirst."

THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

The first regular theatre to be built in England was "The Theatre", erected by James Burbage in 1576. The name "Theatre" was given probably because of its suggestion of the classics, and because it was rather an uncommon name. The common name for a theatre was a *play-house.* The "Theatre" was soon followed by other play-houses. The play-houses of Shakespeare's time fall into two distinct groups: the *public* theatres and the *private* theatres. Most of Shakespeare's plays were written for and acted in the public theatres such as the Globe; but a few were acted in private theatres.

When we speak about the Elizabethan stage it is the public theatres we have in mind. The form of the theatre was partly influenced by the "Rings" and the old Innyards; it was a circular or almost circular structure. Perhaps the play-houses had only one entrance, which would simplify the collection of fees. The "gatherer" stood at the door with his cash-box. The prices of places in the theatre seem to have varied from 1d. to half a crown. In fact the prices were not fixed. They varied according to houses, companies, and occasions.

The stage had no front curtain. It had a back curtain which separated the stage proper from the tiring house. The stage abutted into the auditorium, and the portruding stage probably had rails on the three sides turned towards the

audience. The back of the stage contained a gallery, making a sort of upper room. This gallery did duty for balconies, battlements, upstairs windows and so on. From the floor of this gallery to the stage itself draperies were suspended, forming a kind of inner stage, where "plays within plays" were performed (as in *Midsummer-Night's Dream*), and which served as a bed-room or a throne-room. There were no properties on the stage; what few properties were used being found in the inner stage.

From the beginning of the 17th century places were hired on the stage itself. It became fashionable for young gallants to enter the stage from behind and sit on three-legged stools which could be hired from the actors on extra payment. The entrance to the stage being through the tiring house (where the "extra" for the privilege of sitting on the stage was collected) this custom soon became a nuisance to the actors. Only a royal proclamation in 1665 could put an end to this custom.

The stage, that is the front stage, had a roof above, protecting it from the rain. This roof was referred to as the heavens. The auditorium itself was open to the sky. Climatic conditions therefore greatly affected the plays of Shakespeare's time. The plays were acted during the afternoon. In the earlier days 12 o'clock was the dinner time, and the plays probably commenced at one. But the "modern" fashion of dining at two o'clock, as Dekker tells us, changed the time of the commencement of plays to about three o'clock in the afternoon. The inside of the theatre was open to the daylight, and no lights were needed, except perhaps on wintry days.

The performances in the theatres were announced by trumpets, and by hoisting flags on the garret-like towers of the play-houses. Most of the theatres were outside the municipal limits of the city of London. A line of people could therefore be seen winding their way to the theatres in the early afternoon. On special occasions seats were secured by sending a servant in advance ; and some seem to have enjoyed making a sensation by going in late. Advertisement bills were stuck on posts in different parts of the town.

There was a pit in the auditorium where standing-room was available—these being the cheapest of the places—and here gathered together the riff raff of the town. They were referred to as the groundlings, and Shakespeare speaks ironically of them as the "understanding gentlemen", with a pun on the word "understanding". Smoking, which was still a comparatively new fashion was indulged in freely. Many of the members of the audience seem to have taken a special delight in throwing orange peels and other things at the actors, especially if the acting was not to their taste. Sometimes, we suspect, the actors had to pay the penalty for the author's mistakes. The atmosphere of these theatres was a smoke-filled, stinking, and noisy one.

In the beginning there were no painted scenes ; but these began to come in gradually, especially due to the popularity of masques, and by the end of Shakespeare's time probably the stage had more appeal to the eye than in the earlier days. No attempt was made to adapt the dress historically or realistically, though there was a lavish display of apparel on the stage. All plays were played

in contemporary dress. Latterly some attention was paid to geographical requirements of dress. Often the dress had to be bought by the actors themselves.

The private theatres were quite different from the public ones. These were at first halls belonging to the Queen or to some of the nobles, and as such were different in many very important respects from the public theatres. Lighting arrangements could be made and the plays could be therefore acted at night. The auditorium here was not of course open to the sky. The audience too was of a different kind, and the task of the actors was in many respects easier. Often plays were performed before the King or Queen or some Lord on some special occasion. The plays written for the private theatres are therefore different from those written for the public play-houses. Some of the leading companies of actors soon came to possess private theatres in addition to public houses. Plays acted in private houses would be acted again in the public theatres with some slight alterations and adaptations. Both Queen Elizabeth and King James I enjoyed seeing plays and through their patronage the status of the actors considerably improved as time went on, though in the beginning they seem to have been looked down upon. The acting in the private theatres was at first done by boys of St. Paul's school. There was a sort of rivalry between the boy actors, and the regular actors. But after a time the regular actors began to get a chance to act in private theatres, and as mentioned above, soon came to own some of them. Thus the Blackfriars theatre, which was a private theatre, and where the chapel children used to act, came to be possessed by Burbage and his heirs, and from 1608 onwards

the company called King's Men (Shakespeare's company) was acting here.

The theatres catered to the various demands of the people. Besides catering to satisfy the craving for "beautiful, picturesque language, fine spectacles and merry jests," the play-houses also catered for "rhyming tricks and competitions, graceful exercises of the body, indeed all that might be included under the notion of sport and give opportunity for betting." Shakespeare's plays show that he often gave the audience what they wanted : thus we find a wrestling match in *As You Like It*, a duel in *Macbeth*, a fencing match in *Hamlet*. The plucking out of Gloster's eyes, in *King Lear*, was also perhaps a concession to the audience; such gruesome scenes are usually not shown on the stage. The spectators perhaps took a sporting rather than a literary interest in the things presented to them on the stage. But a certain kind of imagination they certainly had ; for they were able to appreciate and enjoy some of Shakespeare's plays, although the stage properties were very scant, although the nature of the time and place had to be understood from the speeches of the characters, and although the part of the women was played by boys.

DATE OF MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

The evidence for the date of any of Shakespeare's plays can be classified under two heads.

I. *External*—

(*a*) Entry in the Register of the Stationers' Company

(*b*) Publication either in folios or quartos or both.

(*c*) Allusions to the play by contemporaneous writers.

II. *Internal*—

(*a*) Allusions in the play to contemporaneous events.

(*b*) The *style*, *metre* and *construction* of the play.

Under the above heads we have as regards *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*:—

External Evidence.

(*a*) *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* was entered on the Register of the Stationers' Company, October 8, 1600.

(*b*) Two quarto editions of the play were published in 1600; the first "Imprinted for Fisher"; the other "printed by James Roberts." The second quarto was probably a pirated reprint of the first quarto of Fisher.

In the *first* Folio (published in 1623) which was the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* was printed from Robert's Quarto, with a few alterations here and there. The *second* Folio appeared in 1632. It was a mere reprint of the *first* Folio, except for the correction of some obvious errors; and some other conjectural changes were introduced.

(*c*) But the most powerful of all external evidences is that it is mentioned by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, 1598, in the list of Shakespeare's Comedies. The mention of the play proves that it was written and performed before 1598. This is really the only positive evidence that we possess of the date of the composition of the play. We know that it must have been written earlier than 1598.

Internal Evidence.

(*a*) Let us now consider allusions in the play to contemporaneous events. There are *two* important passages in

the play which seem to fix the date of the play. The first of these supposed allusions is in Act II, Scene I, ll. 81-114. It has its bearing on the date of the play. Titania describes in these lines the disastrous state of the weather caused by the dissensions of Titania and Oberon. This passage must have been introduced by Shakespeare in reference to some event of special significance which to the Elizabethan audience was quite well-known. Now every body knows that the summer of the year 1594 was a disastrous season such as is described by Titania in her speech. "There were thunders and lightnings neither seasonable for the time, and withal most terrible, with such effects brought forth that the child unborn shall speak of it". Also we find a reference to this weather in the poem *Charitie* by Churchyard, a minor poet, published in 1595.

"A colder time in world was never seene;
The skies do loure, the sun and moone wax dim;
Summer scarce known, but that the leaves are greene.
The winter's waste drives water ore the brim;
Upon the land great flotes of wood may swim."

From all these records it appears that this weather may have inspired the poet in the composition of the passage referred to, in which case we might definitely fix the date as 1594, or a little later.

The second passage by which the minds of editors have been considerably excercised, and from which many very different conclusions have been drawn, is that in Act V, Scene 1, 52-53, where we read of

"The thrice-three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceas'd in beggary.

In these lines three allusions have been differently traced.

(1) According to some critics, these lines are said to refer to the death of Spenser. Spenser was a leared poet. He wrote the *Fairie Queene*. But he died in poverty. So far the allusion may be right but there is one thing which we must notice. Spenser died in January 1599. If that is the correct date of his death, our reference becomes worthless, unless we take it for granted that the lines were introduced some time after the original production of the play; but for this there is no evidence.

(2) There are some who think that the phrase "thrice-three Muses" in these lines refers to Spenser's *The Tears of the Muses*. Spenser in his poem does speak of the Nine Muses lamenting the decay of learning and the neglect of scholars at the time. And the alliteration used by Shakespearers these lines might be an inspiration from Spenser's love of alliteration. But there are some serious objections to this theory, which render it useless. Let us mention them one by one.

(*a*) *The Tears of the Muses* appeared in 1591, and if we accept 1594 or 1595 as the date of composition of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, the words "*late deceas'd*" are not appropriate.

(*b*) Secondly, Theseus remarks on these lines that "*This is some satire, keen and critical*". Now *the Tears of the Muses* is more a lament than a "*satire.*" That is also not appropiiate.

(*c*) Moreover, Theseus sarcastically rejects the lines as "keen and critical." Now it is not probable that Shakes.

peare would show such disrespect towards Spenser as is conveyed by Theseus in these lines.

(3) There are others who maintain that these lines refer to the death in degraded beggary of Robert Greene, poet, dramatist, and novelist. He had posed as a learned man. Moreover, there was a strong element of "keen and critical" satire in his prose-writings.

But Greene died in the autumn of 1592; so that the words "*late deceas'd*" seem equally fatal to this theory.

(*b*) In the absence therefore of precise internal evidence, we must fall back upon

(*i*) Treatment of subject, train of thought, and general character of the play.

(*ii*) Considerations of style—*e. g.* proportion of end-stopt to run-on lines, number of rhyming lines, profusion or otherwise of imagery, puns, conceit, etc.

Considering all these things we come to the conclusion that *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is an early work, though not one of Shakespeare's earliest. When one reads it one feels that it is the outcome of the poet's youthful imagination. It is not interposed with serious reflections and deep philosophies. Nor do we find any touch of sadness or cynicism which colours some of his later comedies. This play is more or less of the nature of a Masque, and is treated as such. *And Shakespeare here has made plentiful use of rhyme, which points to an early date.*

The blank verse also points to an early date. It reveals signs of immaturity. The number of lines with no extra syllable; the frequency with which the pause

occurs at the close of the line or couplet; the tendency to balance the line with double epithets (*e. g.* "By paved fountain or by rusty brook"); the uniformity of rhythm in long speeches (*e.g.* Titania's in II, 79-116)—*all these indicate that the blank verse here used by Shakespeare belongs to his first period* of dramatic authorship.

Moreover, '*puns*' and '*conceits*' (*i. e.* strained, artificial turns of fancy and expression) which are found generally in Shakespeare's early works are also noticeable in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

Hence we come to the conclusion that the play was written some time during the period 1595.1598, probably nearer the earlier date than the latter date, although some of the commentators have assigned the play every date between 1590 and 1596 and although the majority of editors are in favour of the year 1594.

The sources of the play.

A Midsummer-Night's Dream is one of the most original of Shakespeare's plays. It is mainly the product of his own genius. He has not borrowed much from other sources in this play. Although numerous authorities are quoted as having provided the poet with suggestions for various parts of the drama, yet his borrowings amount to no more than that he has derived the names of some of the characters from these sources.

What Shakespeare knew concerning "Theseus and Hippolyta" was probably derived in the main from two works:

(1) The *Life of Theseus* in North's translation of '*Plutarch's Lives*'. This probably supplied him with the names *Egeus*, *Ægle*, *Perigenia*, *Ariadne*, and *Antiopa* all of which, in one form or another, occur in Plutarch's "Life of Theseus." In this 'life' we find two versions regarding the marriage of Theseus. According to one Theseus made an expedition against the Amazons, tooks Antiopa prisoner, and married her. According to the other story the Amazons invaded Athens. They were defeated by Theseus, who afterwards married the Amazon Queen, Hippolyta. Shakespeare follows the second version.

(2) Shakespeare also read Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, which furnished him with the names of Theseus, *Hippolyta* and *Philostrate*. In this tale, Theseus is described as a Duke and therefore, Shakespeare called him 'the Duke Theseus.'

> Whylom, as olde stories tellen us
> Ther was a duk that highte Theseus ;
> Of Athenes he was lord and governour".

The probable sources of the story of "Pyramus and Thisbe" are the following :—

(*a*) The story of "Pyramus and Thisbe" is told at full length in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Shakespeare seems to have read Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid, which was first printed in 1565. It is certainly the main source of the "interlude" of "Pyramus and Thisbe" in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

(*b*) The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is also told in Chaucer's '*Legend of Thisbe of Babylon*' which is part of

The Legend of Good Women. Shakespeare must have read this poem. In it there is a reference to the grave of King Ninus.

(*c*) Shakespeare also seems tohave read *A New Sonnet of Pyramus and Thisbie* which appeared in *A Handeful of Pleasant Delites* by Clement Robinson, published in 1584. Here, as in Shakespeare's version, Pyramus is styled a "Knight", and both the Muses and the Fates are alluded to.

The notion of a love-juice possessed of magical properties seems to have been borrowed by Shakespeare from the Spanish romance *Diana*, by George of Montemayor (1512—1562).

Shakespeare must have also read *The Merchant's Tale* of Chaucer. It has two points of resemblance to *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*:

(*a*) In it, as in the play, there is a dispute between the fairy King and Queen.

(*b*) The fairy king intervenes between, and seeks to reconcile, and husband and wife. We find a similar thing in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream.* Here Oberon intervenes between the lovers and reconciles them.

The probable sources of the name of Oberon are the following :—

(*a*) The name of Oberon occurs in *Huon de Bordeaux* which was translated from the French into English by Lord Berners in 1534.

(*b*) We also find the name Oberon in Spenser's *Fairie Queene.*

(c) We find the name in another form in *The Scottish Historie of James IV, Entermixed with a pleasant Comedie presented by Oboram, King of Fayeries*," by Robert Greene.

John Lyly's plays treated of mythological or pastoral subjects, and were somewhat of the nature of masques. His influence, as Sidney Lee has pointed out, is seen in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, in the raillery in which both mortals and immortals indulge.

Lastly, Shakespeare must have read *Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft*, 1584 in which are described many of the characteristics of Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, as he is called there.

The fairies treated by Shakespeare in this play do not seem to have been trapped from other places. They existed in Shakespeare's imagination and therefore are for the most part beings of Shakespeare's own creation.

In the case of the Athenian Swains, Bottom and his fellow actors, he did not hunt from land to land, did not rifle ancient literature. He drew them mainly from his own observation. They are not really Athenians, but purely English tradesmen, such as Shakespeare may have met in Stratford or London.

I. Duration of Action

The events of the play occur at the close of April and the beginning of May and this, in spite of the fact that it is called 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream'. This is absolutely

clear from the references to the traditional May day festivities in Act IV. But the questicn of duration of action, *i. e.*, the amount of time which these events occupy or cover presents tremendous difficulties and is almost incapable of a satisfactory solution. Critics are marshalled on opposite sides—those, the majority, that accuse Shakespeare of miscalculation and inaccuracy, either due to the deliberate artistic motive of emphasising the enchanted atmosphere of these dream-play or carelessness, and those, the minority, that would reconcile the inconsistencies and explain away the so-called miscalculation. Whatever be the result of these differences, whether hakespeare stands condemned or vindicated, it will not do to forget that it is a play of dream and enchantment in which strict probability or truth is of little account and that, as such, a too prosaic and logical analysis will be fatal to the charm of this work of pure creative imagination and romance.

The duration of the action is set forth by the dramatist himself in the opening lines of the play. Theseus says, 'Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour, draws on apace; four happy days bring in another moon'. To this Hippolyta replies, 'four days will quickly steep themselves in night; four nights will quickly dream away the time'. These are clear enough statements that the events of the play from beginning to end are to cover four days and four nights. But on analysis of the scenes it is found that the period of the action is three consecutive days, closing at midnight on Mayday, when the weddings and the theatrical over, the lovers prepare to retire (V. i. 355). The time scheme is as follows :

Day 1 — April 29 — Act I.

Day 2 — April 30 — Acts II, III, IV, i. 1 — 135. All the action occurs at night.

Day 3 — May 1 — (Mayday) — the rest.

The 'four days' of Theseus cannot be reconciled with the action of the play, the number of days required being only three. Thus counting backwards from May 1 which is the last day of the action, we arrive at April 30 and 29 as being the other two days. In this connection Wright remarks, 'In the play itself the time is about May day, but Shakespeare from haste or inadvertence has fallen into some confusion in regard to it. Theseus's opening words point to April 27, four days before the new moon which was to behold the night of his marriage with Hippolyta··· The next night which would be April 28, Lysander appoints for Hermia to escape with him from Athens ········· The night of the second day is occupied with the adventures in the wood, and in the morning the lovers are discovered by Theseus and his huntsmen, and it is supposed that they have risen early to observe the rite of May. So that the morning of the third day is the 1st of May, and the last two days of April are lost altogether'. Besides there are serious inconsistencies and contradictions in the poet's references to the moon and the dawn. Hippolyta assures us that the night of her wedding is one of the new moon: yet on the night preceding when there should be moonless darkness we hear of Lysander and Hermia eloping and Oberon and Titania meeting and quarrelling in the moonlight. But it should be borne in mind that it is the poet's world, not the scientist's.

Dr. Furness, the Variorum editor, makes out a case for Theses's four days and Hippolyta's four nights. According to him, the days are April 28, 29, 30 and May 1; the nights are April 27, 28, 29 and 30. The marriage being celebrated in the evening, the night of the 1st of May is naturally excluded. There are also three dawns.

But for the lovers themselves and for the spectators who are under the magic of Shakespearean romance, there are only one night and one dawn, the night that is passed by the lovers in the enchanted woodland, the dawn that awakens them on May-day. Shakespeare counts time on two clocks, the fast and the slow, *i. e*, he expands as well as condenses time, thus making the two impressions of slowness and hurry on the minds of the audience. The whole action is over in three or four days: yet Shakespeare makes our imagination dwell on a longer period in the interest of probability by various subtle hints, suggestions and references. It is towards the end of the drama, after the time has passed swiftly towards the beginning, that the impression of slow time is made. In the last Act we have the strongest impression of time's slow passage. In Act IV, Oberon pities Titania for her infatuation for Bottom and speaks of having upbraided her, on 'meeting her of late behind the wood.' In Act V. when Philostrate tries to dissuade Theseus from hearing the tragical mirth on the ground that the play made his eyes water *when he saw it rehearsed*, we wonder where he could have seen the rehearsal, for we know of only one at which Puck was alone present. But Shakespeare's clock, be it fast

or slow, seems all correct to the audience; such is his magic.

II. Dramatic Construction and Development.—An analysis of the action.

Consisting as it does of varied elements, the action of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is a highly complex one. The different parts of the plot are (1) the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, (2) the fortunes of the two pairs of Athenian lovers, (3) the rehearsal and performance by the 'rude mechanicals' of the interlude of 'Pyramus and Thisbe.' (4) the quarrel of Oberon and Titania. Yet, for all this diversity of elements, the play represents a marvellous unity of dramatic impression created by the dramatist's consummate art of plot-construction. Hallam says in this connection: 'The structure of the fable, consisting as it does of three, if not four actions, very distinct in their subjects and personages, yet wrought into each other without effort or confusion, displays the skill, or rather instinctive felicity, of Shakespeare as much as any play he has written.' A remarkable unity of feeling pervades and governs the entire plot, and the title itself, suggestive of the poet's purpose and aim, reflects this principle of unity in a peculiar degree. The play as a whole is, as Coleridge has happily defined it, 'one continued specimen of the dramatized lyrical.' It is the spirit of pure poetry, lyrical and imaginative, which blends the riches and strange variety into one beautiful effect of dream and enchantment. The play, though made up of the diverse elements of the classical, the romantic, the pastoral and the realistic,

has yet one motive which is, however, more poetic than dramatic, *viz.*, magic or enchantment. But the four different actions or parts of the plot are so handled in themselves and so interwoven with one another that they become intensely dramatic: thus the poetic interest is perfectly balanced by the dramatic. All the four parts of the plot are complete in themselves having a beginning, a middle and an end, and yet they are interdependent. The main plot, which is akin to the subject of the Comedy of Errors, is the love-story of the Athenian lovers 'at the mercy of mischief-making incident.' The marriage of Theseus with Hippolyta forms the setting or, as called by Moulton, 'the enveloping action' of the drama. 'Theseus and Hippolyta are, as it were, a splendid frame for the picture; they take no part in the action, but surround it with a stately pomp' (Schlegel). The two subplots *viz.*, that of the fairies and that of the artizans are closely interwoven with each other and with the two other actions. The clowns unconsciously and the fairies consciously, besides contributing realistic merriment and dreamy enchantment to the play respectively, help the complication as well as the solution of the plot. The 'rude mechanicals', besides supplying matter for laughter and mirth by their stupidities and buffooneries, afford a sharp and vigorous contrast by virtue of their realism to the dainty world of romance, fancy, dream and enchantment represented by the lovers and the fairies, thus raising the dramatic interest of the piece. The fairies, besides contributing the distinctive atmosphere (also suggested by the title) of dream and enchantment which envelopes the whole play, materially help the plot. Oberon, though

anxious to relieve the complications that have arisen in the love-affairs of the Athenian lovers, greatly adds to them through the errors of his minister Puck; but at last he undoes the mischief, unweaves the tangle and brings happiness to the lovers concerned and to Titania, his queen. The love-juice supplies the necessary link between these two actions, for it is through it that the two are connected together. "The love troubles of mortals have their miniature counterpart in the jealousy of the elfin royal pair···and as the human wooers are beguiled by the power of Cupid's magic herb, the fairy queen is in like manner victimized' (Boas). Oberon and Titania are also shown to be interested in Theseus and Hippolyta and their marriage, thereby linking the two stories together. The interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe, an example of a play within play, serves here a distinct dramatic purpose apart from its burlesque intention and is thus closely connected with the rest of the plot. It is a part of the marriage celebrations. Thus we see that the plot and the subplots, all derived from widely different sources, are all blended and interwoven into a compact, harmonius dream drama of the most lyrical and imaginative kind. So well-constructed and well-balanced is the plot that it is not easy to say which of the four is the main action of the play. Each is vitally connected with the rest by important links of dramatic interest.

About the construction of a Shakespearean comedy, Hudson says, 'Like tragedy, comedy deals with a conflict between an individual force (which may be centred either in one character, or in a group of characters acting as one) and environing circumstances. In tragedy the individual

(one person or a group) is overwhelmed ; in comedy the individual triumphs. In comedy, as in tragedy, there are five stages in the plot development: (1) the exposition, or introduction ; (2) the complication, rising action or growth; (3) the climax, crisis, or turning point; (4) the resolution, falling action, or consequence; and (5) the denouement, catastrophe or conclusion···Each of these stages is not clearly differentiated. As a rule they pass insensibly into each other, as they do in life. Especially is this true in a play like *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, where the weaving of the various plot-actions is so close and compact.'

I. The Exposition or Introduction.

In Act I, Sc. i, Theseus, about to marry Hippolyta, orders his Master of the Revels to have celebrations on the occasion. This is the beginning of the first action. Next the story of the Athenian lovers with its peculiar complications is told. Demetrius loves Hermia who loves and is loved by Lysander. Helena loves Demetrius who does not love her but who previously made love to her. Hermia is ordered to marry Demetrius in four days on penalty of death or conventual life. The complication grows when Hermia and Lysander determine to fly from Athens and when Helena prepares to tell Demetrius about their flight. Thus the second action gets going.

It Act I, Sc. ii, Bottom and his company of clownish fellows are getting ready to perform the interlude of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' on Theseus's wedding night. This is the third action which is here linked to the first.

In Act II, Sc. i, 1—187, the fourth action begins and is connected with actions 1 and 2. We are introduced to the fairy world and told about the quarrel between Oberon and Titania over the possession of a little changeling boy. In course of the quarrel they reveal their interest in Theseus and Hippolyta and their marriage, thus linking the two actions together. Oberon orders Puck to bring him the flower called love-in-idleness whose juice he will drop into Titania's sleeping eyes to make her love, by way of punishment, any object she will look on on awaking. Just at this point the relentless Demetrius enters followed by the doting Helena, and their conversation is heard by Oberon. Thus the two actions 2 and 4 are about to be interwoven with each other.

II. The Complication, Rising action or growth.

The action becomes complex and intricate and the dramatic interest grows. In Act II, Sc. i. 187—the end of the scene, the story of the lovers *i.e.* the second or main action is connected with that of the fairies *i.e.* the fourth action. Oberon overhears Demetrius's scornful rejection of Helena's doting love and on Puck's return instructs him to anoint the eyes of the disdainful youth with the love—juice, himself going off to squeeze it into Titania's eyes.

In Act II, Sc. *ii.*, Oberon squeezes the flower on the sleeping Titania's eyelids. Puck coming upon Lysander and Hermia asleep from exhaustion and mistaking the former for Demetrius smears his eyes. Demetrius and Helena then enter and Lysander awaking falls desperately in love with Helena. The complication increases.

In Act III, Sc. i., the 'hempen homespuns' have their rehearsal near the retreat of Titania. Bottom is translated, and Titania awaking falls madly in love with Bottom with the ass's head.

In Act III, Sc. ii, 1—121, the complication approaches the climax when the love-juice is squeezed into the eyes of the sleeping Demetrius and Helena enters as he awakes.

III. The Climax, Crisis, or Turning Point.

In Act III, Sc. ii, 122—447 the plot reaches the height or climax. Demetrius and Lysander vie with each other in protestations of love to Helena and challenge each other to a mortal combat. Hermia and Helona also engage in a bitter quarrel. The challenge and this quarrel constitute an effective dramatic climax. To prevent the fight, Puck leads them away from each other by means of spell. All the four fall asleep close to each other.

IV. The Resolution, Falling Action, or Consequence.

Act III. Sc. iii, 448—the end of the scene marks the beginning of the solution. The application of another herb, Dian's bud, to Lysander's eyes to counteract the charm of Cupid's flower anticipates the end of the complication.

Some critics regard the application of the juice to Lysander's eyes as the climax of the plot.

In Act IV. Sc. i, the solution or the unweaving of the entanglement makes rapid progress and things become

normal again. Oberon applies the juice to Titania's eyes to cure her of her absurd infatuation for Bottom, and husband and wife are reconciled. Puck is also ordered to undo the spell on Bottom and restore his head to its normal human shape. The night of dream and magic is over, and the morning of May-day dawns. Thesus and Hippolyta out for their early morning hunt on May-day discover the lovers and on awakening them are told about their decisions, Lysander to marry Hermia and Demetrius to marry Helena. Theseus orders three marriages that May-day. Thus all the complications are ended and the first and the second actions are brought into connection again.

In Act IV, Sc. ii., Bottom returns to his companions and they complete their arrangements for the performance of the interlude of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' as part of the marriage festivities

V. The Denouement, Catastrophe, or Conclusion.

In Act V, Sc i, the four actions are brought finally into relation with each other for a grand happy conclusion. Theseus and Hippolyta and the two pairs of lovers all reappear to enjoy the marriage festivities between supper and bed-time. The mechanics perform their interlude. Just at midnight when the three pairs are about to retire the fairies appear to bless their wedded life.

'The form of the play is simple. The first act and the last are of the waking day, of real life In the midst s the night, and the fanciful life of a dream. And added to this vivid contrast is the episode of the comic tragedy of Pyramus, which, in a certain sense, combines the real

and the imaginative life—for the working men of Athens are lifted above their daily toil into an ideal world by their rude aspiration to art—creation. Their play knits by its object., which is to do honour to Theseus' marriage, the last act to the first. Finally the marriage of all the lovers is accomplished, and the fairies bless the marriage-bed in lovely poetry.' (Stopford Brooke).

III. General Characteristics of a Mid-summer Night's Dream.

(*a*) **Its dreamy, romantic atmosphere**—The whole atmosphere of this beautiful creation of Shakespeare's sportive fancy is one of dream and romance. Reality here is suspended and the characetrs, such as they are, live, move and have their being in a world of beautifnl unreality. All the witchery and enchantment of Shakespeare's fancy is concentrated in this play where all the natural magic of the mid-summer night and the marvel of the fairy world are painted in the most playful and gorgeous colours. The play is thus ruled not by the law of logic and reason butby the caprice of dream and unreason.

(*b*) **A play with little Characterisation.**—In such a play where the poetic or the lyrical prevails over the dramatic, characterisation is of little or no importance: hence the slightness of the characterisation and of the pure human interest in this play. With the only exception of Theseus and Bottom, the characters are more or less shadowy, bloodless figures with no strongly marked individuality.

There is ample scope in a dream drama like this for love and beauty and joy and magic and music, in short, all the poetry of nature and imagination, and these are scattered

with the richest profusion by the dramatist. But the dramatist, aware that vigorous realism, strong passion, well-marked individuality, or powerful dramatic motives would be fatal to the witchery or magic of the play, introduced very little of them. 'The characters here, accordingly, are drawn with light, delicate, vanishing touches ; some of them being dreamy and sentimental, some gay and frolicsome, and others replete with amusing absurdities, while all are alike dipped in fancy or sprinkled with humour.' The two extremes of delicate, playful fancy end of absurd, grotesque humour, 'elfland and clownland', meet and mingle with wonderful effect in this masterpiece of Shakespeare's youth. The result is a world of fantasies, beautiful and whimsical.

(*c*) **A Dream play.**—Shakespeare's exuberant youthful fancy has been inspired by the dream and allegory of the mediæval romancers. He suggests here what he says more definitely later in the *Tempest*,

'We are such stuff
As dreams are made on ; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.'

He frankly calls the play a 'Dream', and in keeping with the title gives it an atmosphere which is from beginning to end dreamlike. The play bears a close resemblance to a dream in its beautiful intricacy, its wayward fancifulness, its ethereal delicacy and its disregard of realities, especially of time and place. Strict logical coherence is conspicuous by its absence in this dream-world. The keynote is struck when Hippolyta declares in her first speech, 'four nights will quickly *dream* away the time.' At the end of

the play when Puck speaks the epilogue he asks his audience to remember that the play is but a dream. He asks the spectators to think :

" That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend." (V. i. 432—36).

'Oberon desires that all shall regard the matter as a dream, and so it is. Titania speaks of her adventure as a vision, Bottom of his metamorphosis as a dream ; and all the rest awake at last out of a sleep of weariness, and the events leave upon them the impression of a dream. The sober Theseus regards their stories as nothing else than dreams and fantasies.' The fairy folks are dreams personified; the mortal lovers fall under their spell from the moment of their entry into the enchanted woodland and straightway begin to dream. Even the rude mechanical Bottom, a solid and substantial man with none of the finer susceptibilities of human nature about him, on awaking declares:

'I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was : man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream.' Shakespeare himself was in the dreamland of fancy when he composed this play. The drama, as a whole, leaves upon the spectators the impression of a dream. So by Shakespeare's magic wand, the poet, the characters, the spectators are all transported into the dreamland, the whole play being something

of an ideal dream. Coleridge sums it up by saying that he is 'convinced that Shakespeare availed himself of the title of this play in his own mind, and worked upon it as a dream throughout.' The play throughout is governed by the lawless law of this central dream-idea. All through the dramatic interest is subordinated to the lyrical, and the plot, according to the well-known law of dreams, is rendered singularly free from the strict conditions of reality. So there is the ideal lawlessness of the dream world about this play. 'All the diverse elements, natural and supernatural, human and non-human, the dainty and the grotesque, the world of fancy and of fact, romance and of reality all mingle together like the disordered images of a dream, 'such stuff as dreams are made on.' Enchantment serves as the motive force of the play, the fairies forming the common link of the incidents. The principle of psychological motives underlying the story and character-development, present in Shakespeare's other dramas, is altogether absent here. 'Caprice is master' over story and characterisation, and the fairies, obeying no law except that of their impulsive existence, are the embodiment of this caprice. Dreamland has no geography, and Athens where the scene is laid is an ideal place of romance and enchantment. Even the natural scenery, quite in keeping with the spirit of the piece, is ideal, being such as becomes the Elfland.

(*d*) **Its lyrical character**—A Midsummer-Night's Dream is full of a very delicate lyrism. The spirit of the finest poetry, dreamy, emotional, imaginative and musical, has been embodied in it so much so that the dramatic and human interest is altogether lost sight of. The

play is full of the witchery of sound and sight and impulse and suggestion. It is like the rapturous song of an inspired dreamer. The whole play is liberally interspersed with songs which give it a distinctly lyrical character. Besides the lyrical element supplied by song and music, the whole play is lyrical in tone and atmosphere, as has been remarked by Coleridge. 'The whole of A Midsummer-Night's Dream is one continual specimen of the dramatized lyrical.' 'It is not in its dramatic elements that we recognise the master-hand, but rather in *the rich and incomparable lyric poetry* with which Shakespeare embroiders a thin dramatic canvas. His first masterpiece is a masterpiece of grace, both lyrical and comic.'—Brandes. It has been pointed out that the poetry of the play is of a twofold character, (1) that of the daylight *i.e.* of the men and women who are not in the dream and which is as such substantial in thought and feeling and (2) that of the moonlight *i.e*, the delicate, fanciful, elfin poetry of the fairies full of an elusive and indefinable charm.

(*e*) **Its English setting and atmosphere**—Though the scene of the play is laid in the classic land in classic times, yet the action is really mediæval and romantic. The whole atmosphere of the play is English and Elizabethan. Regarded from this point of view, the whole drama, professing to deal with the Athens of Theseus but really dealing with the England of Elizabeth, is a grand anachronism. The landscape is English ; " the wood near Athens,' the haunt of the fairies and the hunting-ground of Theseus, with its primrose beds, banks of wild thyme, cow-slips, oxlips, musk-roses, eglantine, honeysuckle and other

English flowers, great oak-trees, barky elms, dewy glades and wild undergrowth is a typical English woodland such as Shakespeare himself was familiar with in his Warwickshire home and such as possessed a special appeal for the English audience through its native charm. Theseus's hunting-party is an Elizabethan hunting-party in the midst of an English landscape. Theseus up with the dawn on May-morning and out in the woods with his hounds for hunt and with his taste for dramatic performances such as masques and dances, is a true Elizabethan or Tudor lord. Even Philostrate is an Elizabethan Master of the Revels. So are the other personages classical only in name but really Elizabethan in character and tastes. The Athenian lovers might have borne English names without any loss of truth or fidelity. Then 'the rude mechanic patches', Bottom and the rest of 'the hard-handed men that work in Athens here' are drawn from the life. They not only bear English names but are also humorously exaggerated pictures of the working men of his own times whom Shakespeare saw in London and Stratford. Many English sports and games such as May-day festivities, carols, nine men's moris st. Valentane have also been introduced. Puck or Robin Goodfellow is drawn from popular English tradition.

(*f*) **The Different Elements of the Play.**—A remarkable feature of the play is the great dramatic skill with which the 'most dissimilar ingredients' or divergent interests have been compacted by means of a well-constructed plot into a harmonious whole. This has been done from without by means of fairy magic or enchantment, not by

the working of inner motives (For the construction of plot, *See Dramatic Construction and Development*). The play is a typical product of the Elizabethan times, combining as it does many of the distinctive literary interests of the day, *e.g.*, the classical, the romantic, the pastoral, the realistic, youthful passion and love of nature, etc.

1. As a result of the movement known as the Renaissance, there was the revival of an interest in classical literature. Shakespeare also fell under the spell of the classics, and drew freely upon one particular Greek classic, Plutarch's Lives. The first of these lives is that of Theseus which has given him the frame-work of this play. It is also in accordance with the spirit of the times that Shakespeare chose the classic story of Pyramus and Thisbe for the crude representation of the artisans.

2. Along with the rediscovery of the classics, there was the revival of romance. Fairy mythology was a mediæval creation, partly by poets and partly by popular genius, and Spenser more than any other poet contributed to its popularity. Shakespeare took up this romance of fairy-life and invested it with a new life and beauty. The fairies have been truly called the favourite children of Shakespeare's romantic fancy. Shakespeare has thus given immortality to folk-traditions and touched them to finer issues in this play.

3. In the Elizabethan age the classical and the romantic were not kept severely aloof from each other. Like others Shakespeare took up a classical subject and mixed it up with other modern elements. So he has mingled in this play the classical story of Theseus with

the fairy romance of the Middle Ages and the pastoral romance of the Elizabethan age. The mediæval fairies celebrate and bless the marriage of the Greek Theseus and the Amazon Hippolyta. Time is entirely disregarded when it is said that Oberon was the lover of Hippolyta and that Titania, in love with Theseus herself, was jealous of his love-intrigues with Aegle, Ariadne and Antiopa. Shakespeare goes further and makes Oberon take the shape of Corin and 'verse love to amorous Phyllida'. Thus even the shepherds and shepherdesses of Elizabethan pastorals are mixed up with classical personages and mediæval fairies.

4. Another important element is that of realism introduced in the person of the Elizabethan artisans and in their rustic doings and buffooneries. The grotesque absurdity of the interlude and the ludicrous manners and ways of the 'mechanicals' offer a contrast to the heroic and the romantic elements of the play.

5. Another important element is that of love in which Elizabethan poetry was so rich. This play deals with the sober passion of Thesus and Hippolyta and the youthful, all-daring, mad love of the Athenian lovers.

6. All these divergent elements which make up the Mid-summer Night's Dream have been placed in a beautiful natural setting of native English landscape which shows the Elizabethan love of natural scenery. All the sights and sounds and scents of the English countryside are concentrated in the drama.

(*g*) **Its possible connection with some wedding**—It is maintained that the play dealing as it does with the theme of marriage must have been composed for perfor-

mance at some particular marriage. As many as three marriages have been packed into the story, and much of the play is hymeneal in tone and atmosphere. In Elizabethan times it was the custom to celebrate a nobleman's marriage with some dramatic performance such as a masque. As in many respects *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* partakes of he characteristics of a masque, it may have been composed on the occasion of some marriage in some noble family. This theory is also supported by the epithalamium—epilogue. But there are serious difficulties in the way of associating it with any particular wedding. Some, however, suppose that the occasion was the marriage of the Earl of Essex in 1590; others that it was the marriage of Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton in 1598. But the date of the composition of this play, 1594 or 1595, as well as the secret nature of these marriages make it impossible that it should have been written in honour of either. The suggestions that it was written for the Earl of Derby's Marriage in 1595 or the Earl of Bedford's in 1594 are mere conjectures. It is best to take it as a festival-play composed for Midsummer Night.

(*h*) **Its possible performance before Queen Elizabeth.**—Queen Elizabeth herself would seem to have been present at its performance, for there are at least two important passages in which Shakespeare, not usually given to flattery, pays a magnificent tribute to the Maiden Queen.

1. "A fair vestal throned by the west" on whose chaste heart Cupid's fiery shafts make no impression so that 'the imperial votaress passed on, in maiden meditation, fancy-free', spoken of by Oberon in Act II, i. 158—163, must be a reference to Queen Elizabeth.

2. Equally significant is the reference to the unmarried state in Act I, i. 74—78, where Theseus says to Hermia that those girls are 'thrice blessed' who can 'master their blood' to undergo the 'maiden pilgrimage' and live and die in 'single blessedness', even if their married sisters are 'earthlier happy.'

Knowing as we do that Shakespeare never favours the ideal of the single life for women, when we find him eloquently praising virginity rather inappropriately in a bridal play like *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, we may safely conclude that he was trying to please the Maiden Queen. So it is quite likely that she was present at its production.

(*i*) **Anachronisms.**—An anachronism is an error in computing time, generally in the form of an error in dating. In Shakespeare references to customs, things and events inconsistent with the time of the action of the play, *i.e.*, anachronisms are not uncommon.

Dr. Johnson has remarked, 'Our author gives to all nations the customs of England, and to all ages the manners of his own.' Shakespeare was not over-scrupulous about insignificant matters of detail so long as he was true to the spirit of things. Strict accuracy is of no importance in a dream-play like *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*; hence the large number of anachronisms in the play.

(1) References to classical literature. The references to Dido and Aeneus (I. i. 173-4), Helen of Troy (V. i. 11), Hercules and Cadmus (IV. i. 113), are all anachronisms as the time of Theseus *i.e.* the time of the action of the play was previous to the period in which they lived.

(2) References to Christianity. References to Christian institutions and usages, *e g.*, cloister, nun, sister, pilgrimage, paradise, heaven, hell, etc., are all anachronisms in a play the action of which occurred in pre-historic times.

(3) References to English customs of the Elizabethan age *e g.*, masque, interlude, May-day, May-pole, nine men's Morris, St. Valentine, etc., are all anachronism. Really speaking, the whole play with its English setting and atmosphere, its Elizabethan tone and colouring, is an anachronism (*See Its English setting and atmosphere*).

(4) The imtroduction of the whole fairy mythology in a play dealing with Theseus and the Athenian world is an anachronsim as it is a mediæval invention.

(*k*) The Element of Humour in A Midsummer-Night's Dream.

The 'hempen homespuns,' of course, supply the humorous element of the play. They are not humorous themselves but they are the cause of humour in others. So unconsciousness on the part of the artisans of how funny they are and what absurdities they perpetrate is the very essence of the humour. The grotesque humour which they provide is a comic relief to the fanciful (as represented by the fairies) and the heroic (as represented by Theseus and his courtiers) elements of the play. Variety and incongruity are the soul of humour and Shakespeare introduces both in this play in the combination of the serious and the comic. 'The gossamer civilisation of the fairies is judged by Bottom the weaver, who, in his turn, along with his rustic companions, must undergo the courtly criticism of Duke Theseus and the Queen of the Amazons.'

It is one of Shakespeare's dramatic principles to interweave reality and fancy, the serious and the humorous, the tragic and the comic. The tragic and the comic are mingled together in real life so that their separation in water-tight compartments in art is unnatural. So Shakespeare combines the two opposite elements, the realistic and grotesque with the fanciful and romantic in this play. The best example of this combination which produces the mixed effect of 'the grotesquely ludicrous with the irregularly beautiful' is the picture of the beautiful Titania 'rounding the hairy temples' of the self-complacent fool Bottom 'with coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers.' Nothing could be more ludicrous and laughable than the rehearsal scene (Act III, Sc. i), Titania's doting on Bottom (Act IV, Sc. i) and the performance of the interlude (Act V, Sc. i). The king of this comic world in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is Bottom who 'in his broad-blown, self-importance, his all but impenetrable self-satisfaction, stands a head and shoulders higher in absurdity than any other comic personage in Shakespeare's early plays' (Dowden).

(*l*) **Its resemblance to a masque**—The masque is not a native product of the English genius, being first introduced into England from Italy in 1512-13. It was an expensive entertainment, a disguising or a spectacular performance held on some special occasion, *e. g.*, a wedding in the royal court or the houses of the nobility. The actors and actresses who disguised themselves by means of masks were all persons of noble birth. It was a grand show, made up of gorgeous dress and scenery, full of singing and dancing and interspersed

here and there with dialogue. Thus for its effect it depended upon scenic grandeur, the gorgeous dressing of the actors and actresses and the abundance of exquisite music and dancing. The lyrical predominated, as in A Midsummer-Night's Dream, over the dramatic, and its lineal descendant is the modern opera. The thin story which formed the subject of the masque was fanciful and frequently allegorical. The characters generally were supernatural beings drawn from classical mytholgy; and the scene was laid somewhere in the classic land or some imaginary place. Another important element which appeared later was the 'Anti-masque,' a comic interlude which was a parody of the main plot as the performance of Bottom and his fellows in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Of this kind of entertainment Bacon says; 'Let anti-masques not be long; they have been commonly of fools, satyrs, baboons, wild men, antics, beasts, spirits, witches, Aethiopes, pigmies, turquets (Turks), nymphs, rustics, cupids, statues moving and the like.; Fashionable at the Court of Elizabeth, it reached its perfection and the height of popularity in the reign of James I at the hands of Ben. Jonson.

Boas says, 'with its songs and dances and spectacular effects it is almost more of a masque or opera than a comedy in the strict sense, and it makes the impression of having been written in honour of the marriage of some great noble, in which case the bridal blessings with which it closes were doubtless intended to have more than a merely dramatic significance.' It is not altogether a masque, though it closely resembles it in many essential features. The play approaches the masque in the following

points among others.—

(*a*) It is distinctly lyrical in character by reason of its music and dancing. The lyrical greatly predominates over the dramatic.

(*b*) The subject of the story is a very thin and fanciful one. It is a dream play.

(*c*) Supernatural beings have been introduced on a lavish scale in the person of the fairies.

(*d*) The names of the play are of classical (Greek) mythology.

(*e*) The scene is laid in the classic land of Greece.

(*f*) The play is spectacular in character and is scenically very effective.

(*g*) Characterisation has little or no interest in the play, the play having very slight human or dramatic interest. It is more spectacular and lyrical than dramatic. The action is thin and has no inner motives to work it out. The growth of the action and the unravelling of the entanglement are all due to supernatural or external agency.

(*h*) It has a comic or farcical interlude which may be called the anti-masque. The realistic acts as a set-off to the romantic. The rude mechanicals with their rustic buffooneries serve as a contrast to the dainty fairies and the heroic figures of Theseus and the lovers, and the subject matter of the interlude of 'Pyramus and Thisbe; is a parody or ludicrous imitation of the love-making of the play. The humorous aspect of love and the absurdities of lovers are exposed. 'Lord, what fools these mortals be!' as Puck exclaims (Act III, Sc. ii. 115).

(*l*) **The Element of Love in the Play—the central motive.**—Its poetry, its dreamy romance and its sensuousness notwithstanding, love in its two aspects of lawlessness and laughableness is the central *motif* of the play. But love is here not the tragic passion which in its strength and imperiousness makes as well as mars human life as depicted by Shakespeare's tragic muse but the youthful fancy which lands men and women in a thousand whims and pranks and disloyalties as depicted by the comic spirit. Love as treated in Shakespeare's comedies is a disturbing factor in life by reason of its fun and frolic and temporary madness. 'The lover is at odds for the time with all the established order of things, a rebel against the authority of parents (*e.g.*, Hermia against her father Egeus), a rebel against friendship (*e.g.*, Hermia and Helena against each other), a rebel against his own views (as illustrated by the Athenian lovers).'

These two comic aspects of love, viz., its impulsiveness and its absurdity are directly or indirectly illustrated in all the stories of which the composite plot of the play is composed, the story of Theseus's wedding, the story of the Athenian lovers, the story of the quarrel of Oberon and Titania and the story of the rehearsal and performance of the interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe by the rude Handicraftsmen. Though it is the story of Theseus and Hippolyta that links the other stories together and ensures the unity of the play, yet the love-story of the Athenian lovers supplies the central motive of the drama and hence constitutes its chief action. In the broken friendships of the girls Hermia and Helena, in Hermia's defiance of her father and Athenian law and the inconstancy of the lovers Demetrius and Lysander, the comical capriciousness and absurdity of

love (the central idea) find their illustration. Shakespeare's treatment of love at times borders almost on the farcical. Puck's words,

'Lord, what fools these mortals be!'

are the immortal commentary of the comic muse on the fantastic absurdity of mortal love. In the play, inconstancy in human love is ascribed to supernatural agency, to the capricious interference of the fairies with the course of love. Yet we feel that the introduction of the fairies does not make any real difference, for 'love in idleness' in the hearts of boys and girls in real life is capricious and irresponsible in its course. 'Boys in love change their minds just so, or almost just so, without any whisper of the fairies to guide them'. There is indeed a whimsical, irresponsible element in human love (in human nature) which is just symbolised by fairy-life in this play.

Love in its more sober and serious aspect is represented by Theseus's wedding. It is no longer the picture of the whimsical, impulsive lover but that of the loving as well as dutiful husband. So this story also, however slightly, illustrates the central idea.

Waywardness and inconstancy in love which is but a passing disturbance in human life is the normal order of fairy life. These sensuous, irresponsible creatures are the embodiment of caprice and impulsiveness in love: the quarrels and reconciliations of the fairy king and the fairy queen are absolutely typical of fairy life. Comic impulsiveness in love is most grotesquely symbolized by Titania's love for Bottom the ass. Thus the picture of the fairy lovers given in the play also illustrates the central idea of love in

idleness.

The central idea is not, of course, directly illustrated in the story of the rude mechanicals. 'The story is required, partly to introduce the interlude, but still more to provide that comic contrast which was essential to the masque. It is ingeniously interwoven into the fairy-story by making Bottom the instrument of Oberon's revenge upon Titania'. So Bottom too, an immortal comic creation of Shakespeare, plays an indirect part in the illustration of the central theme.

The interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe is nothing but a fantastic, comical representation of love which is the central theme of the play.

The Title of the Play:

The question as to why the play is called 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream' is rather ticklish.

The Elizabethan dramatists in general and Shakespeare in particular often chose catching and cleverly-worked titles for many of their dramas. The titles of some of the Shakespearean comedies are extremely attractive. All this was due to the desire on the part of the dramatists to capture the popular imagination. 'As You Like It,' 'Twelfth Night,' 'All's Well That Ends Well,' 'Comedy of Errors', 'Much Ado About Nothing', are a few of the interesting titles that Shakespeare has chosen for some of his comedies.

Now we may ask ourselves—what is the meaning of the title 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream'? Midsummer-day or the *day of St. John the Baptist* is the *24th of June.* Can we suppose that the events of the drama happened on or about this day.' The answer must be in the negative, for internal evidence is against this supposition. The story

covers three days, *i.e.* the 29th and 30th of April and the 1st of May. The events in Act I happen on the 29th April; those in Acts II and III on the night of April 30; and the rest of the story on the 1st of May. (*Cf*. Act IV, Sc. i., Lines 109, 137 and 138—refer to the May-day ceremonies.)

Was the play, then, written specially for performance on the night of the Midsummer-day?

We cannot say. We are not sure of the exact date of composition nor do we know of any occasion on which it was performed. All that we can say is that in view of the masque-like character of the play, it looks like having been meant for some festive occasion. But what that occasion might have been we are left only to guess, though some critics strongly feel like connecting the play with some festival. We know that 'Twelfth Night' was written for that occasion and 'A Winter's Tale' was meant for "beguiling the dreary leisure of a long winter evening."

Drake supposes, however, that the play refers to the common notion of "Midsummer Madness" which we find in the drama. It is believed that midsummer heat sometimes disturbs the brain and induces temporary madness. The imaginative flights of the lovers in the play, their vagaries of passion, their fantastic moods and changeful feelings under the influence of fairy-enchantment,—all look like passing fits of lunacy. Drake refers, in this connection, to Olivia's speech in *Twelfth' Night* where she describes the absurdities of Malvolio, almost verging on insanity, as "*Midsummer Madness.*" But this view appears to be extremely fanciful.

How then can we reasonably explain the title ?

Midsummer-day was one of the happiest festivals of the Christian world in general and of England in particular.

(1) The Midsummer-evening would have plenty of festivities, bon-fires, decorations, songs, pageants and theatrical shows, and this play is well in harmony with these joyous associations.

(2) But in addition to these, St. John's day was traditionally connected with numerous superstitions. It was believed that on this particular night witches, spirits and fairies ruled the world and marvellous things happened under supernatural influence. The lovers having strange experiences in the elfland, Bottom being transformed into an ass and falling in love with Titania, Puck and the tiny little beings of the fairydom flitting and gleaming in the grateful moonlight,—all these well accord with the popular notions associated with this festive night. Ben Jonson's masque entitled *The Satyr*, designed for the Midsummer-Night, has such characters as 'Pug' resembling Shakespeare's Puck, 'Queen Mab' answering to Titania, a Satyr or wood-spirit and other supernatural beings. Thus it is not unreasonable to maintain that the title of this Shakespearean drama is appropriate.

But why is it called a dream ? The answer is easy enough. It is clear that the atmosphere that pervades the drama is the atmosphere of a dream and that the impression which the play leaves on the reader is one of a protracted vision. The world that Shakespeare has created for us here is "of such stuff as dreams are made on" and the fairy wood "is rounded with a sleep." In this land of love-in-idledess, of moonlight and pansies and good greenwood,

of footless dances and airy songs, of Cupid's shafts and freaks of passion, of phantom joys and fleeting sorrows, we way well imagine that the mythic crew of Morpheus (God of Sleep) run wild and dreams flit from bush to bush. Here in this glamour "airy nothing" seems to be the only reality and "nothing is but what is not." The very genius of this world is to create what *cannot be*, and all logic is suspended here save the logic of the absurd. The phantasies and caprices of the lovers, moreover, do not spring from the changeless deeps of life. They are like bubbles that gleam for a while on the surface of the mind and then burst into nothingness. There again, we find a sort of dream-sense ruling the human and the non-human characters of the play and Shakespeare seems to emphasise this point. In the epilogue Puck desires the spectators to regard the piece as a dream. The lovers sleep and dream and change and then wake to sleep again. Titania remembers her infatuation as a dream and so does the practical Bottom. Thesus regards the experiences of the lovers as dreams and visions, and appraises their story at what it is worth. And when the play is done and the curtain drops, we are left wondering whether all this actually happened or whether we have just had a strange dream. Thus we rub our eyes in wonder and go humming home—"Midsummer-Night's Dream-indeed."

The Sapernatural or fairies in a Mid-Summer Night Dream—

(*a*) **Fairy mythology—its conception and its origin.** —Two conceptions of Fairyland have permanently come to capture the human imagination, *viz.*, (1) that of Shakespeare who represents the Fairies in A Mid-Summer Night's Dream and in other plays as 'minute ethereal beings, invisible to

mortal eyes, who hide themselves in the hollow of a nut, or the petals of a flower,' and (2) that of romance which is chiefly of French origin which represents fairies as 'more or less human in stature and appearance, but gifted with supernatural or magical powers.' Both are essentially literary or artistic conceptions. *But the traditional fairies of folk-lore or rustic belief are not the same as these creations of art and literature.*

The fays of the romances are primarily enchantresses. Though they are gifted with powers of magic and enchantment, yet they are human in looks and liability to death. They play a very important part in the mediæval romances of Arthur and Charlemagne. Frequently the fays preside at the birth of children and give them supernatural blessings or curse. They often make love to mortals. In the later romances they become fairy godmothers to human children. But gradually a change came over the conception of the fairyland which was due to *an intermingling of the fays of romance with the elves of folk-lore.* Every race had its folk-lore of a supernatural population which lived in a kingdom of its own underground and occasionally meddled in human affairs. These elves of popular belief came to be identified with the fays or enchantresses of romance and the fairy-land and fairy king and fairy queen came into being.

There came a change even over the fairies in German and French romances under the influence of the popular elves. We come across 'the dwarfe of the fayry, King *Oberon*' in the French romance of Huon of Bordeux evidently inspired by the dwarf Albrich (elf)+rich (King) of the

German romance of the *Nibelungen Lied.*; Oberon is the English form of the French Auberon which is probably only a translation of the german name Alberich.........In Oberon we have the Teutonic 'dwarf' and the romantic 'fay' very completely blended together.' Chaucer also identifies the elves of popular fancy with the fairies of romance. Spenser also in his Faerie Queene identifies the elves with the fairies. Not only were elves of popular belief and fairies of romance identified with each other but both of them were also identified with Nymphs, Fauns, Satyrs and similar gods and goddesses of classical mythology.

Shakespeare naturally was familiar with and drew inspiration from the literary treatment of fairylore in English literature such as Chaucer's and Spenser's and the English versions of French romances. But he was certainly not the first to admit fairies to the stage. But the most important source upon which Shakespeare drew, next to his own romantic imagination, was the traditional fairy-lore of his native country of Warwickshire.

The Supernatural in Shakespeare's Age. 'The Supernatural, as generally understood, includes all those phenomena which cannot be explained by the known and accepted laws of Natural Science.' From a study of Shakespeare's works the conclusion is irresistible that his age abounded in superstition which ascribed effects, subsequently discovered to be quite natural, to the agency of the spirit-world. Shakespeare himself as a young man was peculiarly susceptible to the common beliefs of his age. The belief in the supernatural was universal in Shakespeare's England, permeating the whole of Elizabethan Society from the highest to the lowest. Superstition dies hard and even in

these days of scientific advance and wide-spread education people are susceptible to beliefs in ghosts and fairies. It is quite natural therefore that in those days of little knowledge the lives of the people should have been governed by the superstious beliefs. There were, however, men like Reginald Scot (in his Discovery of Witchcraft)—a few progressive thinkers and pioneers of science—who tried to brush away the cobwebs of common unscientific beliefs. But their efforts met with little success. Belief in the influence of stars and planets, in the existence of fabulous animals, tales of devils, witches, ghosts and goblins and fairies persisted in spite of the campaign of science and reason and were handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth among the country folk. No wonder therefore that this universal faith in, and fear of, the Supernatural forced a popular dramatist (*i.e.*, Shakespeare) to adopt current beliefs, though he himself might be the most hardened sceptic. Shakespeare's ghosts, however, are sometimes objective and sometimes subjective. The objective ghost was actually present to and seen by general people at the same time as in *Hamlet*, while the subjective one was the product of an overwrought imagination, a hallucination or figment of the fancy as in *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*. By far the greatest majority of supernatural forms in the Elizabethan age inspired awe and terror, were extremely gloomy and horrible in character. So it is an infinite relief to turn from these gloomy creations to the lighter, gayer and happier world of the fairies, the most delightful creation of the human fancy.

Shakespeare and the Supernatural Belief in the supernatural has been the peculiar heritage of the English race. Shakespeare, heir to this rich heritage when he came,

made a glorious use of it with the help of his colourful and romantic imagination. Like everybody else he was deeply influenced by the forces of his time and environment. During the years that he spent in rural England amid its sights and sounds and picturesque folk-lore, his susceptible mind became a storehouse of popular traditions, beliefs, fables and myths. He has put all these masses of living folk-lore current among the Warwickshire peasantry to a splendid artistic use in his dramas. It would be possible to gather all kinds of Elizabethan folk-lore touching all sides of life from the plays of Shakespeare. This willing, unquestioning adoption of the folk-lore of the countryside in his earlier plays was typical of his general attitude towards life in his early youth. There was as yet no indication of the sorrow and gloom which came to him in later years. In a spirit of youthful optimism and light-heartedness he introduced the supernatural in the innocent and picturesque form of fairies in his early plays. In a spirit of youthful fun and frivolity and with an unlimited zest for existence he wandered for a spell in the fanciful and romantic world of fairies. Wisdom and philosophy, however, came with the years and with it doubt and questioning and disillusion; but that was in the period of the tragedies. In the meantime in spite of the assaults of science and philosophy, old beliefs and superstitions continued to hold their sway over the popular mind. 'Shakespeare, whatever his private opinion and prejudices, was compelled as a working dramatist to adopt the views of majority. The people who flocked to the theatres demanded fairies, ghosts and witches and all the popular beliefs about them. Shakespeare, as a popular dramatist, had to make large concessions to the people's demand and fill his plays

with popular beliefs. But Shakespeare was too great a genius to pander entirely to the vulgar taste and to rest content with the mere reproduction of folk-lore. He adapted the supernatural of popular belief to his own dramatic purpose and original fancy. It underwent a magical transformation in his hands. Shakespeare was fully justified in making use of the superstitious current in his day. Mediæval folk lore was in the direct line of succession to classical mythology, and Shakespeare, like the poets of ancient Greece and Rome, drew freely upon this source of picturesque fancy and beautiful romance.

"To summarize Shakespeare's attitude towards the superstitions of his age, we can surmise that as a young man he imbibed and believed in all the folk-lore poured into his ears by the country people among whom he lived. When he came to London and mixed with men of advanced thought, he dropped many of his old ideas and ranged him-, self with the philosophers and scientists. As a dramatist however, he still handled and portrayed the old beliefs, but always *with some higher dramatic purpose in mind than a desire to delight the shallow and ignorant audience.* By the success he attained in the task he set himself, he gave one of the hightest proofs of his unequalled gifts."

Shakespeare's treatment of Fairies in A Mid-Summer-Night's Dream.—

'Shakespeare shows us the fairies as *little people, joyous beautiful, immortal,* and *harbouring good thoughts towards men.* They meddled in human affairs, it is true, *played many a mischievous prank,* and awarded minor punishments for minor sins. But *in the main they were friendly, helpful, childlike, and harmless* .... One could

believe in them, submit to them, associate with them, and be joyous and carefree as they were.'

It is in this play that the dramatist makes his first excursion into the realm of the supernatural and gives to it the harmless, happy but fantastic form of fairies. The Fairy-land of this play is the delightful creation of a young poet at once familiar with all the rustic beliefs of the English countryside and endowed with exuberant fancy and creative imagination. His choice of faries was to a certain extent determined by their traditional associations with wedding in honour of which this play must have been composed. He deserts, however, the unattractive fairies of folk-lore for lovely creations of his romantic fancy. There is absolultely no serious significance or meaning attached to the fairies here. They are just created for entertainment. These tiny, dream-like beings mix freely with men but have no real influence over them. His use of the fairies is absolutely original.

Difference between Shakespear's Fairies and the Faries of folk-lore.

'When Shakespeare resolved to enter fairyland, he was not content with any half-way house. He reached the very heart of Oberon and Titania's Kingdom. He clothed the Fairies in many of the common superstitions which he had gathered from years of sojourn amongst convinced believers. Few of the rustics of the Stratford country would care to deny the existence of the Little People·········But Shakespeare's Fairies differed greatly from the products of rustic belief. Furness writes: "The fairies of folk-lore were rough and repulsive, taking their style from the hempen

homespuns who invented them."............There was a wide gulf between the Shakespearean fairies and the fairies of rustic belief. The very diminutive beings of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with their acorn cups, their fans of butterfly wings, and torches of the thighs of humble bees *were wholly the creation of Shakespeare.* The folk—fairies differed widely from them, particularly in size and disposition. The fairies of popular superstition were equal in stature to the smaller size of men, and so far from being helpful, friendly and happy, were wicked and dreaded spirits, who where associated with witches, abducted mortals, dealt in changelings, smote humans with disease, blasted crops, stole cattle, and punished with pinchings and nippings unchastity, uncleanliness and any invasion of their fairy privacy. *It is eloquent of the supreme genius of Shakespeare that his original creation of the subjects of Oberon and Titania proved so beautiful, poetic and fascinating that the unlovely folk-fairies disappeared entirely from literature, and the Shakespearean conception usurped and retained their place in the popular mind.'*

'Titania, Oberon and their trains are "fairies of another sort;" and *Shakespeare undoubtedly owed a great deal in their conception to the old Greek writers.* We can recognise in them "the nymphs and fauns, the naiads and dryads of Greece." There he found the grace and beauty of his Titania and her subjects. *But, as usual, he was not content to copy.* He did not merely reproduce the Nymphs, Fauns, and Satyrs of mythology. He draped their forms artistically in current superstitions, softening their classical character, and making them thoroughly English's modern.' *Shakespeare* and *fairy creation is thus a rare combination of the varied*

elements of classical mythology, medieval romance, English folk-lore and, above all, his most original romatic fancy or creative imagination.

Characteristics of Shakespeare's Fairies—

1. They form a community, under a King and Queen. The King has his jester (II. i. 45), the Queen her attendants. The King's jester is 'the shrewd and Knavish sprite, called Robin Goodfellow.' There are a Court and knighthood. The Court is somewhere in 'the farthest steppe of India.'

2. They are immortal. That they are immortal unlike the humans is suggested by the contempt with which they speak of human mortality. "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

3. They are diminutive in size. This is one of Shakespeare's chief departures from folk-lore. They can 'creep into acorn-cups and hide them there;' they wear coats made of the wings of bats, and butterflies' wings serve as their fans etc

4. They are invisible to mortals and can vanish at will (II. i. 186)

5. They can assume any shape they please. This gives Puck great opportunities for mischief. (II. i. 43—48.)

6. They move with the greatest speed, not being subject to limitations of time and space.

Puck goes 'swifter than arrow from the Tarter's bow (III. 2. 101) and can 'put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes' (II. i. 176). One of Titania's fairies wanders 'swifter than the moon's sphere' (II. i. 7)

7. They are elemental spirits and have great influence over weather conditions. Their quarrel disturbs the winds

and the moon, cause fogs and tempests. They take a share in the life of nature, 'hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear' (II. i. 15), know the secrets of herbs and overcast the sky with fogs.

8. They live in the most lovely places :

'.........in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea.' (II. i. 83—85)

Or sleep like Titania on

'.........a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows ;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet mask-roses, and with eglantine.'
(II. i. 249—252.)

9. Night in the light of the moon is the time for their fun and frolic. Midnight is 'fairy time, (V. i. 371). Summer is the season which the fairies enjoy ; when winter comes they migrate like the swallows to warmer regions such as 'the spiced Indian air. 'They generally retire at dawn, though not compelled to do so like the ghosts and the damned spirits. Their whole existence is a dream.

10. Though they are immortal, yet they enjoy mortal pleasures. They eat, drink and make merry and are very fond of music and dancing. They dance in circles on the green. They live a life of sense, nature and fancy, untroubled by thought or seriousness.

11. They fall in love with mortals (II. i. 69,72).

12. They steal babies and leave changelings. But Titania does so from an impulse of humanity.

13. They delight in fun and mischief; but there is no malice or spite in it. It is mere sport. When the joke has gone too far, they readily set things right again.

14. They mix freely with mortals.

15. They delight in blessing men. They bless the best bridal bed and make the issue fortunate.

Influence of A Mid-Summer Night's Dream on Fairy mythology.

'The Fairies of Shakespeare have been truly denominated *the favourite children of his romantic fancy*, and, perhaps, in no part of his works has he exhibited a more creative and visionary pencil, or a finer tone of enthusiasm, than in bodying forth "these airy nothings," and in giving them in brighter and ever-durable tints, once more.

"A local habitation and a name." Of his unlimited sway over this delightful world of ideal forms, no stronger proof can be given than that he imparted an entirely new cast of character to the beings he has evoked from its bosom, purposely *omitting the darker shades of their character, and, whilst throwing round them a flood of light, playful, yet exquisitely soft and tender, endowing them with the moral attributes of purity and benevolenee* In fact, he not only *dismisses altogether the fairies of a malignant nature*, but clothes the milder yet mixed tribe of his predecessors with a more fascinating sportiveness, and with a much larger share of unalloyed goodness." (Drake).

"The poet's orignal conception of fairies as *tiny, benevolent aery beings* influenced all subsequent literture on the subject and finally dispelled the old ideas of malicious,

evil, awful creatures who had to be obeyed and propitiated. The *picture conjured up in our minds to-day by the word fairy is as different as could be to the repulsive fairy of the Elizabethans; and the change can be traced to Shakespeare and Midsummer Night Dream.*" (Clark).

Individual characteristics of the Fairy-Characters in the play —

For details about Oberon, Titania and Puck, see *Characters.*

"The little Fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-Seed, who are instructed by Titania to be 'kind and courteous' to Bottom are apparently the product of Shakespeare's fancy alone. Their names suggest beauties of Nature personified, and their presence gives an excuse for introducing many of the quaint ideas of the country-side."

THE CHARACTERS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.—*How to study a character.*

Careful and accurate study of character is no easy thing. A correct estimate of a character of some drama or novel needs a little knowledge of human nature. Ordinary writers generally give us very conventional types. Such types are more or less fixed and rounded. They look like manufactured articles turned out by the same machine. They live, move, think, feel, will and talk in pretty much the same way. The case is different with great writers. They create live individuals and their creatures are as varied as in life. Many of Shakespeare's characters are living ones. They show that the creator was a great

student of humanity. Thus to study them needs some knowledge of men and things. We must, however, qualify our statement and say that the characters in the very early dramas of Shakespeare are sometimes of a conventional type and very seldom possess those mysteries and subtleties of human nature which we find in his maturer creations. The *dramatis personae* in Midsummer-Night's Dream are very lighty drawn and show immature execution.

There are various ways in which we can study some particular character in a drama :

1. We should critically examine what one character says of another. Shakespeare generally makes one character give the estimate of another. If the person speaking happens to be a good, just and wise man, quite intimate with the one he speakes about, 'we can, with some assurance, accept his verdict which, however, we may modify, if necessary, in the light of our own judgment. If the speaker happens to be an enemy of 'the man he refers to and if the former speaks well of the latter, we have every reason to believe that there is much truth in the estimate, for an enemy generally speaks ill of an enemy.

2. We should not, however, depend upon the judgment of others. We should carefully read the speeches of the character in course of his conversation with others. This will, to some extent, give us an idea of his nature.

3. But speeches in the presence of others may sometimes conceal rather than reveal the mind of the speaker. This is true of insincere men.

4. Hence *soliloquies* and *asides* (*i.e.*, speeches when the person speaks alone or addresses the audience or communes with himself) give us a surer clue to the character of the speaker. But even these may mislead us, for a man may try to deceive himself and his conscious utterances may belie his real nature of which he may be unconscious at least for the time being.

5. Hence action which expresses volition or will may help us in forming an estimate of the actor. Thus we should examine what a person does and how he does it.

6. But the same action may sometimes proceed from different motives in different circumstances. Hence a close analysis of motives is necessary for a correct understanding of the right spring of action. This needs psychological analysis.

7. But the apparatus of the 19th century criticism is not sufficient in this scientific age. Scientific criticism in the modern times requires the help of Psycho-analysis. The conscious mind which speaks and acts is largely dominated and made what it is by what the moderns call the Unconscious. The Unconscious is made up of complexes and fetishisms and the somatic and the psychic tell into one another. Sometimes in Shakespeare we have pathological types such as Hamlet, Lear, Ophelia, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth and others. Even apparently normal people are, to borrow the telling phrase of Hamlet, "mad north-north-west." Most ordinary people, also, occasionally speak and act under the urge of the Unconscious. Thus the technique of modern criticism cannot be perfect without taking the help now and again of Psycho-analysis. We should not,

however, press the point too far, for Psycho-analytical criticism may be risky and misleading. Besides this, the types created are fictitious and have never lived. Thus to diagnose the disease of the person who was never born sometimes looks ridiculous. But we should not forget that the writer is a living man and that his creations are largely determined by his unconscious mind which transmits a part of its own character to these children.

8. But the best way of estimating a character is to combine all these methods, exercise personal judgment, draw out explicity the suggestions and implications of the dramatist, go straight to the very heart of a person's motivation and through analysis and synthesis obtain a correct view of his conduct and character.

II. *The characters of the drama.*

The Fairy Kingdom.

Source.

The notion of an elf-monarch reigning over the fairy kingdom dates in English poetry as far back as Chaucer. In "The Wife of Bath's Tale" Chaucer talks of

"The elf-queen, with her jolly company
Danced full oft in many a green mead"

(*Spellings modernized*).

In "The Merchants' Tale". Chaucer ascribes to Pluto supremacy.

over the world of elves and fays—.
Pluto, that is the king of fairies
And many a lady in his company
Following his wife, the queen Proserpine."
(*Spellings modernized*).

Chaucer's tale and Shakespeare's play have two points of resemblance: (1) In both, there is a discord between the elf-monarch and his queen. (2) The fairy king intervenes between a husband and a wife just as Oberon brings about reconciliation between the lovers.

But though Chaucer and others had spoken something alout this invisible population of the air, it was for the genius of Shakespeare to make them speak themselves. His delineation of them is altogether original.

What, then, are the characteristics of this fairy population ?

They are very small beings, and extreme care is taken to impress the shortness of their size on the mind of the reader. Time with them moves with the slowest pace imaginable.

"Come now", cries Titania,.
"Come now a roundel and a fairy song,
Then for the third part of a moment hence ;
Some to kill cankers in the musk rose buds :
Some war with rere-mice for their lethen wings.
To make my small elves coats."

Their haunts are the most romantic places that can be selected in Nature.

They meet "on hill, in dale, forest or mead", "by paved fountain" or by "rushy brooks."

The resting place of the elf-queen is
"Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
With sweet musk roses and with eglantine".
At night they revel beneath the moon and stars.
Damned spirits troop home to
Churchyards at the approach of
"Aurora's harbinger". But says Oberon :—
"We are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning love have oft made sport;
And like a forester the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate full fiery red
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow-gold his salt green streams"

(III, ii, 388).

They can command the swiftest speed and Puck can put a "girdle round about the earth in forty minutes". He flies "swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow."

And 'we', says Oberon :—
"We the globes can compass soon
Swifter than the wandering moon."

(IV, i, 94).

Puck combines in himself nearly all the attributes of the fairy people. He is the spirit of mischief personified. All situations evoke his laughter, none draws his pity.

He loves sport and merriment; he teases poor human sufferers. It is a pure fun to him to think "what fools these mortals be".

Shakespeare pictures these fairis as devoid of fellow-feeling and morality. The untoward consequences of their mistakes make no impression on their minds. They have no conscience, no intelligence. They are incapable of thought and reflection. Only once does Puck make a sententious-remark—"O lord, what fools these mortals be!" but whosoever has carefully read the play will find it out of harmony with the rest. When Titania awakes from the vision of her love for Bottom, there is no scene of reconciliation with her husband, nothing of remorse or reflction in her.

They love all objects of sensuous beauty. They have a strong liking for what is beautiful, clean and neat, thus establishing the truth of the old notion that cleanliness is next to godliness. They like nightingales, butterflies, flowers, dew-drops and moonbeams. They bless all that is lovely and agreeable.

On the other hand, they keep waging incessant war against all the ugly things in Nature—against bats, spotted snakes, beetles and the like. They "kill cankers in the musk rose-buds" and keep back the clamorous owl. They steal lovely children and substitute defective changelings. It is their aversion to ugliness that causes them to torment Bottom and his crew.

Their nature is superior to man's. They can with their magic kindle or kill love in human beings. But their power over the human mind works only through the medium of dreams. Coleridge too "is convinced that Shake. speare availed himself of the title of the play in his mind,

and worked upon it as a dream throughout." The copricious turn of events, not governed by the law of cause and effect, strengthen the impression of a dreamland atmosphere. The whole play is an ideal dream, and this effect is due to the fairies.

The fairies lead a life of luxury and pleasures of senses. They sleep in flowers, lulled by dances and songs.

The secrets of herbs and of the 'Cupid's flower' are known to them.

Jealousy is the only feeling that agitates their being. The royal quarrel between Oberon and Titania over the possession of the "changeling boy" is a case in point.

Oberon

Origin.

Oberon is the fairy king. Originally he had been conceived in a German brain and later found his way into English mythology through the medium of French.

The German Alberich or Elferich (lit Elf-king) had been long known in the German fairy-lore and romances. This Alberich travelled into France under the name of Alberon or Auberon.

Auberon figured prominently in many French fairy-tales and romances, among others in "Huon de Bordeaux." This work dates back to the twelfth or thirteenth century. In or about 1534, Lord Berners brought out an English translation of the prose version of this work that was originally a verse-romance.

Critics hold that Lord Berner's translation marked the introduction into English literature of Auberon or the

Anglicised form Oberon, used throughout by Berners. The fact of the great popularity of this translation lends colour to the belief that it was known to Shakespeare. At least the romance and the play agree in locating the fairy-land in the Far East. The romance describes Oberon as the "King of Momur", which place (we are told) lies in the remote Central Asia. We are told by Titania in the play that the mother of the changeling boy "hath full often gossip'd by my side" in the "Special Indian Air."

He is invisible

Puck addresses him as a "King of Shadows." He speaks of himself

"I am invisible.
And I will overhear this Conference." (II, i, 183).

Here is a spirit of the night, who revels beneath the light of the moon and the stars.

Only 'damned spirits' troop home to churchyard at the approach of 'Aurora's harbinger' but he is "a spirit of another sort and hath oft made sport with the morning's love. But at the sight of the sun, he must retire."

He has at his command the traditional swiftness of the spirits

We the globe can compass soon
Swifter than the wandering moon

(IV, i, 94).

He has a concern for the true lovers. When Puck narrates to him how skilfully he arranged the situation that 'Titania waked and straight-way loved an ass", Oberon's

mind flies to Demetrius—the faithless Athenian and he enquires—

"But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?"
(III, ii, 36).

He has a keen sense of what is absurd and ludicrous in the doings of men. The wayward follies of lovers provide pure sport for him. When Lysander and Demetrius retire to fight over their love for Helena, Oberon devises some sport and asks Puck—

"To stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius."
(III, ii, 361).

He takes special pains to so arrange the duel that the lovers may come to no harm.

He has great attraction for cleanliness and sensuous beauty.

The 'best bride-bed' will be blessed by him.

He rules supreme over the word of dreams. He can with the aid of his 'Cupid flower' inspire or kill love in any heart. He is always friendly to lovers. He is a king of the fairy land; Puck is his prime minister, all elves and fairies are his subjects and agents of his will.

Puck or Robin Goodfellow.

Originally Puck was not a proper name. "Puck" says Keightley, "is evidently the same with the old word 'Pouke', the original meaning of which would seem to be devil, demon or evil spirit.—the Icelandic 'Puki' is an evil spirit—in Friestland the Kobold is called Puck, and

in old German we meet with Putz or Butz as the name of a being not ualike the original English Puck. The Devonshire fairies are called Pixies, and the Irish have their Pooka and the Welsh their Pcwa, both derived from Pouke or Puck.

The peasantry sometimes say that they are "Poake-ledden," that is, they are occasionally way-laid in the night by a mischievous sprite whom they call Poake who leads them into ditches, bogs, pools and other such scrapes, and then sets up a loud laugh and leaves them quite bewildered in the lurch."

Evidently Shakespeare was the first to use "Puck" as a proper name. He identifies him with Robin Good-fellow who figures prominently in English and German folklore. Robin Goodfellow answers in name and character to the German sprite Kneeht Ruprecht.

Puck can assume different shapes, especially of animals, to frighten people

Sometimes a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire ;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt and roar and burn
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire at every turn."
(III, 1, 98).

Puck can put a "girdle round about the earth in forty minutes"; he can go "swifter than the wind" or "swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow."

He is the spirit of mischief personified. Though Goodfellow by name, his love and practice of mischief are quite unchecked by considerations of fellow feeling.

The evil consequences of his mistakes make no impression on him.—

"Believe me" he says :—

"Believe me king of shadows, I mistook
And so far I am glad it so did sort,
And this their jangling I esteem a sport."

(III, ii, 346).

Puck always laughs at the lovers and never pities them even in their distressed condition. He feels himself of a nature superior to man and exclaims with contempt

"What fools these mortals be."

(III, ii, 115)

Traditional aspects of his character.—The character and functions assigned to Puck are mainly traditional. We have it in Scott's 'Discovery of Witchcraft' that. "Robin Goodfellow would supply the office of servants, specially maids, as to make a fire in the morning, sweep the house, grind mustard and malt".

Burton also in his "Anatomy of Melancholy" mentions spirits "Called with us hobgoblins, and Robin Goodfellows who would grind corn". Tradition has it that, if displeased, he interferes with domestic duties. He leads travellers astray at night. And we have it said about Puck in the play :—

"Are you not he.
That frightens the maidens of the villagery,
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn
And sometimes make the drink to bear no harm

Mislead night wanderers laughing at their harm.
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck
You do their work and they shall have good luck."
(II, i, 34)

Bottom the Weaver.

His supreme self-assurance

Of all the characters in the drama Bottom perhaps is the most intimately realised and the most-living, vital and realistic.

He is the very embodiment of self-assurance. Being a little more clever than his companions, he is regarded by them as a superman. Quince and Flute think it impossible to successfully stage the play without him. (IV, ii, 6). Greatness is so thurst on him by his companions that self-assertion becoms a habit and a passion with him. He has the longest part in the flay.

His companions assign to him the chief part in the 'interlude'. He would play Pyramus with such skill that the audience would 'look to their eyes, "he would move storms". But he hastens to add that "his chief humour is for a tyrant" "he could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split". In all this we find Shakespeare's note of gentle satire on the rant and bombast of some of the actors of his time. When the part of the heroine is assigned to Flute, he would like to play Thisbe too and gives a specimen of "the monstrous little voice" in which he would gracefully say 'Ah, Pyramus, my dear lover'.

He would like to appropriate to himself the part of the lion too. 'I will roar' he says, that I will do any man's

heart good to hear me. I will roar that I will make the Duke say 'let him roar again."' To Quince's remark that he would roar terribly and frighten the duchess and the ladies, he is ready with the reply that he would "aggravate" his voice so that he "would roar you as gently as any suckling dove", he would roar "and't were any nightingle".

His great concern is lest, if he be confined to one part, the others "may be overdone and come trady off". He wishes all the parts to have the benefit of his matchless acting and when at last, he has contented himself with a single part, he engages himself in suggesting improvements and training the actors with the air of a manager, which post Quince fills only nominally.

At the rehearsal in the forest near Athens, the appearance of Puck frightens away all his less witty companions. But Bottom would not fly for "this is a knavery of them to make me afeard" and Bottom would not be afraid. He shall sing, that they hear that he is not afraid.

Nor does his self-complacency desert him in the presence of Titania.

He talks with her as with an ordinary mortal.

He commands, as a matter of course, the four fairies placed at his disposal by Titania. Even she and her people must not stir him as he has an "exposition of sleep come upon him."

When he wakes from his experience of the fairy land, he will get Peter Quince to write a ballad on his dream, so that the memory of him, the hero of the ballad, may be perpetuated.

When during the performance of the play Theseus remarks that the "wall being sensible should curse again," he does not hesitate to correct even the majestic Duke. 'No Sir, he should not', he replies "Deceiving me is Thisby's cue ; she is to enter now and I am to spy her through the wall."

Bottom and the ass-head.

The mischievous sprite Puck fastens an ass-head on his shoulders. He is as supremely unconscious of this encumbrance, as he always is of the ass within him. Schlegel happily remarks that "the droll wonder of Bottom's metamorphosis is merely the translation of a metaphor in its literal sense." It is the "turning of a figure of speech in a visible form." Delightful to imagine, the visible effect of his transformation would be appalling.

Bottom's 'translation' has an appeal to the mind's eye and not to the eye of the body. Or as Dr. Hudson says :—

The turning of a figure of speech thus into visible form is a thing only to be thought of or imagined ; so that probably no attempt to paint or represent it to the senses can ever succeed ········ So a child, for instance, takes great pleasure in fancying the stick he is riding to be a horse, when he would be frightened out of his wits, were the stick to quicken and expand into an actual horse ..... We enjoy visions in our sleep, that would only disgust or terrify us, should we wake and find them solidified into things. The effect of Bottom's transformation can hardly be much otherwise, if set forth in visible, animated shape."

But the realism of Bottom's characterization delights us. He is live to the tips of his finger. In his malapro pism (a favourite device with Shakespeare), in his quaint, slangy phrasing, in the rough, offhand air of a thorough-going commoner, in his obtuseness, in his air of self-importance and lastly in the buffoonish dash in his nature—a thing of which he is sublimely unconscious,—Bottom is one of those assinine goodfellows of Shakespeare who are thoroughly Elizabethan and completely English.

Theseus.

He is a man of action.

"Theseus" says Dowden "is Shakespeare's early ideal of a heroic warrior and a man of action". Though the play does not present him in any heroic action, references are made to his military greatness and valour.

He himself describes Hercules as his "kinsman" (V, 46). He does not favour the presentation of one interlude for

"It was played
When I from Thebes comes last a conqueror".
(V, 51).

Even his bride Hippolyta was won by him in a battle. He says :—

"Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries."
(I, i, 16).

Thus with his towering greatness, implied rather than explicit, he dominates the play. Every one defers to his authority. No one questions his word or crosses his purpose.

Not that he is a tyrant; gentleness and fellow-feelings are native to his nature.

He is "to the manner born."

When Egeus approaches him with a complaint against Hermia, he, with a gentle concern for her, advises her not to embark on a rash endeavour.—

There, fair Hermia, question your desires
Know of your youth, examine well your blood.
(I, i, 67).

Equally characteristic is his attitude towards the interlude players. Though Hippolyta is impatient of the performance and desires it to conclude at once, he is more tolerant and forbearing for, as he says, "in the modesty of fearful duty I read as much as from the rattling tongue of saucy and audacious eloquence." (V, 101).

His criticism of plays and players is also very characteristic of him as a man of action. "The best of this kind" he remarks, "are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amends them." For to such a warrior deeds not words make an appeal. Imagination is humbug and the meanest bit of experience more valuable than the greatest flights of fancy, (V, i, 210).

He is a classical person with romantic trappings.

His name is Greek though the delineation of his character is romantic. This anachronism seems to be due to Shakespeare's comparative ignorance of the ancient languages.

Mr. H. N. Hudson has a beautiful note on this point.

"Theseus," he says, "has been well-described as a

classic personage with romantic features and expression. The name is Greek, but the nature and spirit are essentially Gothic".

And then he goes on to add :—

"This sort of anachronism, common to all modern writers before and during the age of Shakespeare, seems to have arisen in part from a comparative dearth of classical learning, which left men to contemplate the heroes of antiquity under the forms into which their own mind and manners had been cast. Thus their delineations became informed with the genius of romance; the condensed grace of ancient character giving way to the enlargement of chivalrous magnanimity and honour, with its high-erected thoughts seated in hearts of courtesy ; such in shakespeare's case appears to have been the no less beautiful than natural result of the "small learning" so often smiled, and sometimes barked at by those more skilled in the ancient languages than in the mother tongue of Nature."

It must be admitted, however, that the Duke and the other human characters of the drama are very slightly and superficially sketched. The play was written when Shakespeare's art was very immature. He did not yet develop that sureness of touch which we find in his later comedies or in his great tragedies. Hence we seldom find any complexies in these characters.

Titania

Titania is the fairy queen. Titania was a title of the classical goddess Diana, whom mythology represented as being followed by a train of 'nymphs'. When popular

belief identified nymphs with fairies, Diana naturally came to be regarded as the queen of the fairies.

It is not sure whether this play marked the introduction of Titania into English literature.

As already pointed out, Chaucer had called her 'Proserpine'. In "Romeo and Juliet" Queen Mab is treated as a fairy queen.

It is worthy of note that the functions of Titania are the same as Mercutio assigns to Queen Mab—"She delivers men's fancies of their dreams."

The place of her repose is the most romantic—

"A bank whereon the wild thyme blows, where oxlips and the nodding violet grows." She leads the life of luxury and pleasure. She is lulled to sleep by dance and songs. She is a being without any moral or reflective sense and when she recovers from the effects of "Cupid's flower" there is no reconciliation with her husband, nor a trace of reflection and remorce.

She is jealous. Jealousy is the only feeling that can agitate her. When Oberon begs the little changeling boy from her, she only replies :—

"Set your heart at rest,

The fairy-land buys not the child of me." (II, i, 122).

Though devoid of what we may call a character, Titania has about her the aerial grace and dreamy beauty of the fairy world. She is fascinatingly romantic. The tiny little objects of nature which are exquisite and lovely always appeal to her. She is thus a sort of romance queen of the fairydom and makes a deep impression on the youthful reader of the play.

Lysander and Demetrus

They both belong to the category of conventional lovers. The line of demarcation between them is exceedingly faint. Omit the names from their speeches, and you would confuse the utterances of the one with those of the other. They have not much of heart or soul in them. They have no distinct individuality and personality.

Perhaps one distinctive mark between them is that Demetrius is a shade more haughty and spiteful than Lysander who is open and candid.

In the play we see them actuated not by any motive or principle but by the irresistible fairy influences which mark "the sleep of reason." Their actions are shaped by capricious impulse and fancy. Then, again, they do not very much grow and develop through the drama for the simple reason that the drama has very little of real human action and passion. In a lyrical melodrama of changeful loves and fleeting ecstasies, these dream-ridden romance-puppets find a congenial place. Characters develop through the play and interplay passions. But here in this world of dreams of the intensities and realities of life shimmer into smoke and film. Thus they donot really feel, really suffer and really grow.

Hermia.

Her personal appearance

She is short and dark-complaxioned.

'And are you grown so high in his esteem
Because I am so dwarfish and so low."

(III. ii, 294).

Under the iufluence of Cupid's flower when he does not look at her with the lover's eyes, Lysander exclaims:—

"Away you Ethiope" (III. ii, 258).

Reference to her bright eyes abound in the play

"And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes."
(I. i. 230).

"For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine."
(I. i, 242).

"Your eyes are lode-stars, and your tongues sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherds' ear."
(I. i, 183).

She is sharp of tongue and fierce.

"O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd !
She was a vixen when she went to school ;
And though she be but little; she is fierce."
(III, ii, 323.)

She herself says —"I am not yet so low,
But that my nails can reach unto your eyes.

Her love for Lysander

Love is the swaying emotion of her life and she would marry only for love."

"O hell to choose love by another's eyes."
(I, ii, 140).

She is ready to suffer the utmost penalty of law for her love for Lysander. When he proposes to her to fly to the house of his distant aunt, seven leagues remote, 'where the sharp Athenian law cannot pursue them' she without the slightest hesitation swears to meet him in the wood.

"By all the vows that ever men have broke
In number more than ever women spoke."
(I. i, 174).

When the fairy influences fire Demetrius with intense love for her, she only evinces great concern for Lysander's safety.—

"Hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder do so much."
(III, ii, 70).

Her affection for Helena

Having grown together since the very childhood, 'with two seeming bodies but one heart, she yet harbours some love and affection for Helena. She goes so far as to confide in her the secret of her intended flight with Lysander

"And thence from Athens turn away our eyes.
To seek uew friends and stranger companies."
(I, i, 218).

Helena

In appearance Helena is tall and fair. Hermia refers to this fact when she suspects her to have usurped her place in Lysander's heart.

"And with her personage her tall personage
Her height forsooth, she hath prevailed with him."
(III ii, 292).

Her maidenliness.

She is feminine to the red ripe of her heart. Her weakness shows itself when Hermia offers to hurt her eyes with her nails.—

"I have no gift at all in shrewishness ;
I am a right maid for my Cowardice.
Let her not strike me." (III, ii, 301.)

When under the influence of some potent charm Lysander and Demetrius begin to superpraise her parts, she thinks that it is the unkind Hermia who had set Lysander to vex her with mock praises. She could nat bear it any longar and would have returned to Athens at daybreak had not the 'king of shadows' brought all to a happy conclusion.

Her love for Demetrius.

The conscisusness of her unrequited love is strong within her. 'How happy some o'er other—some can be' she thinks when herself she is 'miserable most to love unloved'. Demetrius for her is 'all the world' nor did the 'wood lack worlds of company' when he was with her.

It is onl y for his love and the pleasure of following him into the wood that she betrays the secret of her friend's flight to him.

"Stay, though thow kill me, sweet Demetrius."
(II, ii, 85).

And when he does not stay, she gives a chase to him, till she is panting for breath.

"O' 'I am out of breath in this fond chase'
(II, ii, 87).

Helena and Hermia contrasted.

Though resembling each other in so many points, Helena and Hermia form a strong contrast in personal appearance as also in temperament and disposition. They have this advantage over their respective lovers who are practically undistinguishable.

Thus Helena is tall and fair, while Hermia is of short stature and dark complexion. Helena is a gentle maid, feminine to the core, of milder disposition, yieldingly timid in spirits with not much of confidence in her, Hermia is'keen and shrewd' when 'she is angry' and strong and fierce when crossed in her purposes.

But these are simple distinctions and the characters have no uniqueness or individuality as one meets with in the similar creations of the maturer comedies like As You Like It or Much Ado about Nothing.

Egeus.

Egeus is the father of Hermia. Though hardly forty lines have been alloted to him in the whole of the play, yet he impresses the reader with a distinct individuality. He expects unquestioning obedience from his daughter since "she is mine" and would command her to woo and wed a husband of his own choice. And when her great love for Lysander cannot let her accord with his wishes to marry Demetrius, he 'full of vexation' goes to Duke Theseus "with camplaint against his child, his daughter Hermia".

"I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her,
Which shall be either to this gentleman,
Or to her death according to our law."

(I, i, 43).

It is worthy of note that he does not refer to the 'livery of a nun' that was the third course open to Hermia.

And when in the act of flight from the clutches of the cruel law of Athens, Lysander and Hermia are discovered in the wood by Theseus and his nuptial train, he is quick to demand from the Duke the application of the bloody law.

"Enough, enough, my lord, you have enough,
I beg the law, the law npon his head.
They would have stolen away."

(IV, i, 152).

He is a cruel task-master who can go to any length, when thwarted in his wishes, and it is only when Theseus 'overbears his will' that the marriage of Lysander and Hermia is celebrated to their great joy.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.

EGEUS, father to Hermia.

LYSANDAR, } in love with Hermia.
DEMETRIUS, }

PHILOSTRATE, master of the revels to Theseus.

QUINCE, a carpenter.

SNUG, a joiner.

BOTTOM, a weaver.

FLUTE, a bellows-mender.

SNOUT, a tinker.

STARVELING, a tailor.

HIPPOLYTA, queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.

HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.

HELENA, in love with Demetrius.

OBERON, king of the fairies.

TITANIA, queen of the fairies.

PUCK, or Robin Goodfellow.

PEASEBLOSSOM, }
COBWEB, } fairies.
MOTH, }
MUSTARDSEED, }

Other fairies attending their King and Queen.

Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE: *Athens, and a wood near it.*

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Athens. The palace of* THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, *and* Attendants.

The. Now, fair Hippolyta, our *nuptial*[1] hour
Draws on *apace*;[2] four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! she *lingers*[3] my desires,
Like to a step-dame or a dowager
Long *withering out*[4] a young man's revenue.

Hip. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly *dream away*[5] the time;

[1] wedding
[2] swiftly.
[3] puts off the realization of.
[4] causing to diminish.
[5] pass away in dreams.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Athens. A room in the palace of* THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE *and* Attendants.

The. Beauteous Queen Hippolyta, the time of our wedding quickly approaches; in four happy days more the new moon begins her reign; but this old moon is waning very, very slowly. She, by decreasing very slowly, delays the realisation of my desires like a widow, who for long years keeps the young heir out of the possession of that portion of his father's property to which she is entitled as her dower, and which will be his at her death.

Hip. One after the other the four days will be swallowed up by the gloom of night; four nights will quickly pass away in dreams:

And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our *solemnities.*[1]

The. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the *pert*[2] and nimble spirit of mirth:
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.
[*Exit Philostrate.*
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee *in another key*,[3]
With pomp, with *triumph*[4] and with revelling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, *and* DEMETRIUS.

Ege. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!

[1] marriage festivities.
[2] lively.
[3] in a different way.
[4] public festivities.

then the silvery crescent of the new moon will appear in the skies, and that night shall witness our marriage ceremonies.

The. Philostrate, go forth to the city, and arouse the Athenian youngmen to mirth and gaiety; ask them to turn their minds towards lively pleasure. Turn melancholy out of doors, and let it go as an accompaniment to funerals; the magnificence and splendour of our ceremonies must not be destroyed by the spectacle of suffering. (*Exit Philostrate*). Fair Queen, I courted you with my sword; and I, once your adversary, have now gained your love. But I will marry you in a different way. The occasion will be marked by shows, pageants and feastings.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER *and* DEMETRIUS.

Ege. Be happy, noble lord!

The. Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

Ege. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander: and, my gracious duke,
This hath bewitch'd the *bosom*[1] of my child:
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child:
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of *feigning*[2] love,
And *stolen the impression of her fantasy*[3]
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, *gawds*,[4] *conceits*,[5]

[1] heart
[2] pretending.
[3] fraudulently stamped your image on imagination.
[4] cheap ornaments.
[5] presents fancifully devised.

The. Worthy Egeus, I thank thee. What is it you have to tell us about yourself?

Ege. I have been greatly annoyed by my daughter Hermia, so I come before you to complain against her. Demetrius, come forward. Sir, I have agreed to give my daughter in marriage to this man. Lysander, come forward also; and, my noble Sir, this man has cast a spell over my child's heart. Yes, Lysander, you have addressed her in verse and given to her and received from her presents in pledge of love. In moon-light you, with false voice, have chanted false songs of love; you have beguiled her innocent fancy with gifts, ornaments braided with locks of your hair, rings and

[1] trifles.
[2] influence.
[3] tender.
[4] stolen.
[5] the right which as in the past belonged to Athenian citizens.
[6] especially devised to meet such a case.
[7] be careful.

Knacks,[1] trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers
Of strong *prevailment*[2] in *unharden'd*[3] youth:
With cunning hast thou *filch'd*[4] my daughter's heart,
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg *the ancient privilege of Athens*,[5]
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided[6] in that case.

The. What say you, Hermia? *be advised*,[7] fair maid:
To you your father should be as a god;

---

pretty trifles, with flowers and sweetmeats; all these are most persuasive envoys to those like my daughter whose tender age is easily impressed. You have stolen my child's affections with artifice and made her obstinately oppose my rightful authority. Therefore, most noble lord, if in your presence she refuses to marry Demetrius, I pray that I may be allowed to exercise the power which the time-honoured custom of Athens places in my hands. As she belongs to me, I may do as I please with her. She shall either marry Demetrius or lose her life in accordance with that law which is expressly applicable to a case of such disobedience.

The. What have you to say, sweet Hermia? I advise you to obey your father. You should regard him a god. You

One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it[1].
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Her. So is Lysander.

The. In himself he is;
But in this *kind*,[2] *wanting*[3] your father's *voice*,[4]
The other must be held the worthier.

Her. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

The. Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

[1] to let you live or kill you.
[2] respect.
[3] lacking.
[4] consent.

owe your personal beauty to him. His impress is stamped upon you as a seal and it lies within his power to leave the figure (of your beauty) as it is, or to destory it, *i.e.*, who has the power of life and death over you. Demetrius is a worthly gentleman.

Her. Lysander is also a worthy man.

The. No doubt he is, as far as his own personality is concerned; but in this particular respect, since he lacks your father's approval, he must be held to be less worthy than Demetrius who has that approval.

Her. I would like my father to see things with my eyes

The. You should wish instead that his wisdom could teach you the right point of view.

Her. I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may *concern*[1] my modesty,
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

The. Either to *die the death*[2] or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;
Know[3] of your youth, examine well your *blood*,[4]
Whether if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure *the livery of a nun*,[5]
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
To live a *barren*[6] sister all your life,

[1] befit.
[2] suffer the death penalty imposed by law.
[3] enquire.
[4] impulses.
[5] become one of the nuns.
[6] childless.

Her. I humbly beseech your forgiveness, my lord, I do not know what inward strength emboldens me; nor do I know what opinion may be held of my maidenly modesty when I am advocating my own cause in the presence of one so exalted as yourself. But I beg you to tell me what my fate will be if I refuse to marry Demetrius.

The. You will either forfeit your life, or else you must entirely forswear all further intercourse with men. As to yourself, therefore, if you can endure this fate; question your youth, analyse your ardent feelings and enquire of your own heart whether you can bear a life of gloom and seclusion, attired in the convent robes, passing the days in constant

Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;[1]
But *earthlier happy*[2] is the rose distill'd,
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

Her. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my *virgin patent*[3] up
Unto *his lordship*,[4] whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

The. Take time to pause; and, by the next new moon—
The sealing-day[5] betwixt my love and me
For everlasting bond of fellowship—
Upon that day either prepare to die

[1] to pass through life as maidens.
[2] happy in a more earthly way.
[3] the privilege of remaining unmarried.
[4] the sovereignty of him.
[5] the day on which our contract of marriage be fulfilled.

religious meditation, and singing tired hymns of praise to that chastecold divinity, the moon. They are really happy who can curb their earthly passions and who can endure to pass through life without the blessing of marriage; but as regards *earthly* happiness, better is the maiden who marries and perpetuates her fragrance through her children, than the one who dies udwedded. like a rose that fades away on a thorny branch.

Her. And in that way will I, too, grow, live and die, noble duke, rather than give up my maidenhood to the authority of the person whom I do not desire, and to whom my heart would never yield obedience.

The. Take time to reflect on the matter; and by the next new moon—the day which shall witness the marriage contract between my beloved queen and myself, that will bind us together for ever—you must be prepared to die, should you refuse

For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on *Diana's*[1] altar *to protest*[2]
For aye austerity and single life.
Dem. Relent, sweet Hermia: and, Lysander, yield
Thy *crazed title*[3] to my certain right.
Lys. You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.
Ege. Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him.
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do *estate unto*[4] Demetrius.

[1] the moon goddess of chastity.
[2] take a vow of.
[3] invalid claim.
[4] bestow upon.

to marry Demetrius as your father wishes; or else to take the vows of virginity and serve the chaste Diana for ever.

Dem. Let your heart soften, dear Hermia; and you Lysander, give up this ridiculous claim of yours in favour of my true right.

Lys. You enjoy the love of her father, Demetrius, and you can marry him. Let me have the love of Hermia only.

Ege. It is true, scornful Lysander, I have given him my affection; and for the affection I bear him I shall give him what is in my power to give. My daughter belongs to me, and I give all my rights concerning her to Demetrius.

Lys. I am, my lord, as well *derived*[1] as he,
As *well-possess'd*;[2] my love is more than his;
My fortunes every way *as fairly rank'd*,[3]
If not with vantage, as Demetrius';
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia:
Why should not I then *prosecute*[4] my right?
Demetrius, I'll *avouch*[5] it *to his head*,[6]
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her *soul*;[7] and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, *dotes in idolatry*,[8]
Upon this *spotted*[9] and inconstant man.

[1] descended.
[2] rich
[3] in every respect my fortune is as good as that of Demetrius, if not better.
[4] follow up
[5] assert.
[6] to his face.
[7] heart.
[8] passionately loves; idolizes him.
[9] wicked.

Lys. Sir, I am as nobly descended as Demetrius and as wealthy as he, and my love is more than his. In that which I owe to fortune, I am in all respects the equal, if not the superior, of Demetrius; his love is the gift of Nature, his prosperity of fortune. But of greater importance than all these is the fact that lovely Hermia has given me her love. Why should not I then follow up my right? As for Demetrius, he has already paid court to the lady Helena, daughter of Nedar, and I boldly assert it to his face. He has won her heart, she loves him devotedly; she worships with foolishly passionate love this fickle and blame-worthy person.

The. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;
But, being over-full of *self-affairs*,[1]
My mind did lose it. But, Demetius, come;
And come, Egeus; you shall go with me,
I have some private *schooling*[2] for you both.
For you, fair Hermia, look you *arm*[3] yourself
To fit your *fancies*[4] to your father's will;
Or else the law of Athens yields you up—
Which by no means we may *extenuate*[5]—
To death, or to a vow of single life.
Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love?
Demetrius and Egeus, go along:
I must employ you in some business
Against[6] our nuptial and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

[1] my own private affairs.
[2] directions.
[3] prepare.
[4] fanciful desires.
[5] mitigate.
[6] in preparation for.

The. I admit that such a story has been told me and I intended to ask Demetrius to explain his conduct, but I was so much occupied with my personal affairs that I forgot it. Egeus and Demetrius, accompany me now; I wish to speak privately to you both. On your part, sweet maid, prepare yourself to accommodate your fanciful desires to your father's determination in the matter, or else you will be condemned either to death or to perpetual singleness by our law, which it is impossible to stretch or alter in your favour. Come, my beloved, how do you fare, dearest? Demetrius and Egeus, come with us. I wish to employ you for some matters concerning our marriage ceremonies, and I have also something to say to you about your own affair that affects you closely.

Eg-. With duty and desire[1] we follow you.
[*Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.*

Lys. How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

Her. Belike[2] for want of rain, which I could well
Beteem[3] them from the tempest of my eyes.

Lys. Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But, either it was different in *blood*,[4]—

Her. O *cross*![5] *too high to be enthrall'd to low.*[6]

Lys. Or else *misgraffed*[7] in respect of years,—

[1] with a dutiful eagerness.
[2] probably
[3] supply.
[4] birth.
[5] vexation.
[6] a person of high birth should be the slave of a person of low birth.
[7] ill-assorted.

Eje. With dutiful eagerness we follow you.
(*Exeunt* all but Lysander and Hermia).

Lys. What is it, my dear one? What has blanched your cheeks? Why has the rosy bloom so quickly faded?

Her. Perhaps because the blossoms have not been watered. I could give them plenty of rain from the torrent of tears ready to pour forth from my eyes.

Lys. Alas! in my studies or in the stories, historicalor fanciful, that I head, I have never found that the current of faithful love was ever allowed to flow on without interruption. Always there was some difficulty in the way; either difference in birth—

Her. Oh! wat a trial that one of higher rank should be the slave of love to one of lower rank.

Lys. Or else the difference in age is too great.

Her. O spite! too old to be engaged to young.
Lys. Or else it *stood upon*[1] the choice of friends,—
Her. O hell! to choose love by another's eyes.
Lys. Or, if there were a *sympathy*[2] in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it *momentany*[3] as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
Brief as the lightning in the *collied*[4] night,
That, in a *spleen*,[5] unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to *confusion*.[6]

[1] depend on.
[2] agreement.
[3] momentary.
[4] coal black.
[5] sudden outbreak.
[6] destruction.

Her. O misfortune, that age should bestow its love on youth.

Lys. Or else it depended upon, was due to, the choice made by friends.

Her. O misery, that choice in the matter of love should be made by people other than those immediately concerned.

Lys. Or even though the union should be suitable in every way, some outside factors, such as war disease or death work to destroy the happiness of the lovers. Love then dies as a sound dies upon the air; it passes like the fleeting shadows; it vanishes as quickly as a dream, as instantaneously as a flash of lightning in the coal-black night, which in a sudden fit exposes earth and skies to view, and before one can say "Behold," is swallowed up in darkness again. In this way, all bright things like love come to ruin quickly.

Her. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,
It stands as an *edict in destiny*:[1]
Then let us *teach our trial patience*,[2]
Because it is a customary cross,
As *due*[3] to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor *fancy's*[4] followers.

Lys. A *good persuasion*:[5] therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child:
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she *respects*[6] me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia may I marry thee;
And to that place the *sharp*[7] Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;

[1] a law of fate.
[2] teach ourselves patience to bear our trial.
[3] proper.
[4] love.
[5] strong argument.
[6] looks upon, regards.
[7] severe.

Her. Thus if true lovers are always crossed, it stands as a decree firmly established by destiny. Then let us learn patiently to endure our trial. It seems that these are the usual trials of lovers, to which they are as constantly exposed as the sorrows, longings, hopes, fears and imaginings that love ever brings in its train.

Lys. That is a sensible opinion to hold; therefore, listen to me, Hermia. I have an aunt, an old widow possessed of considerable wealth. She has no child. She lives about twenty-one miles away from Athens. She regards me as her only son. There, I shall be able to marry you as there we shall be out of the reach of the cruel law of Athens. If you really love me, leave your father's house secretly to-morrow night and

And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To *do observance to a morn of May*,[1]
There will I stay for thee.

Her. My good Lysander!
I swear to thee, by *Cupid's*[2] strongest bow,
By his *best arrow*[3] with the golden head,
By the *simplicity*[4] of Venus' doves,
By that which *knitteth*[5] souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burn'd the *Carthage queen*,[6]
When the false *Troyan*[7] under sail was seen,
By all the vows that ever men have broke,
In number more than ever women spoke,
In that same place thou hast appointed *me*,[8]
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

[1] celebrated May day customs and observances.
[2] the god of love.
[3] the arrow tipped with gold caused love.
[4] innocence.
[5] bind together.
[6] Dido
[7] Aeneas.
[8] for me.

go to the forest, which stands at a distance of about a league from the town. I shall wait for you in the place where I met you once with Helena when we were observing the May day customs.

Her. My good Lysander; I solemnly vow, by the little love-god's most effective weapons, by his gold-tipped arrow which causes love, by the snowy doves which draw the chariot of his mother Venus, by the bond of affection that binds the two hearts together and strengthens love, by the sacrificial flames which consumed the fair Queen Dido, who died for love on being forsaken by the deceitful Aeneas, and by all the solemn protestations of love that have ever been made by men (and which are more in number than those of women), that I will certainly do as you wish and meet you at the appointed place to-morrow.

Lys. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter HELENA.

Her. God speed fair Helena! whither away?

Hel. Call you me fair? *that fair*[1] again unsay.
Demetrius loves your *fair*:[2] O happy fair!
Your eyes are *lode-stars*;[3] and your tongue's sweet *air*[4]
More *tuneable*[5] than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching: O, were *favour*[6] so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,

[1] the word fair.
[2] beauty.
[3] guiding stars.
[4] sound.
[5] tuneful
[6] looks.

Lys. Dear one, keep your promise. See Helena is approaching.

Enter HELEMA.

Her. Lovely Helena, Heaven be with you! where are you going?

Hel. Do you apply the word "fair" to me? O take it back again. Demetrius loves your beauty; O beauty, you are fortunate in attracting the love of Demetrius. He finds his guiding stars in your bright eyes; and the sweet sound of your voice is to him more melodious than the song of the lark to the shepherd in the sweet spring-time when the young corn is springing, and trees put forth their bloom. Had it been possible to catch beauty like sickness from another, I would have caught it from you before I parted from you I would assume your voice, your bright eyes and your sweet accents.

My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being *bated*,[1]
The rest I'ld give to be to you *translated*.[2]
O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You *sway*[3] the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Her. I frown upon him, yet he loves me *still*.[4]

Hel. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!

Her. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

Hel. O that my prayers could such affection *move*![5]

Her. The more I hate, the more he follows me.

Hel. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

[1] excepted.
[2] transformed.
[3] control.
[4] in spite of.
[5] inspire.

Were it possible for me to be thus transformed into your likeness, I would give you in return the whole universe, if it were mine, excepting only Demetrius himself. O, teach me the art with which you make his heart move in whatever direction you please.

Her. I look coldly upon him, yet he loves me.

Hel. I wish your looks of scorn would teach my smiling looks how to keep him faithful to me.

Her. I curse him, yet he loves me.

Hel. I wish my entreaties could have the same effect as your hard words.

Her. The more I hate him, the more he pays court to me

Hel. The more I love him, the more he hates me.

Her. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.
Hel. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!
Her. Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;
Lysander and myself will *fly*[1] this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see,
Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:
O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!
Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:
To-morrow night, when *Phœbe*[2] doth behold
Her silver visage *in the watery glass*,[3]
Decking with *liquid pearl*[4] the bladed grass,
A time that lovers' flights doth *still*[5] conceal,
Through Athen's gates have we devised to steal.

1 leave in haste.
2 the moon.
3 reflected in the water.
4 dew drops.
5 always.

Her. But I am not to blame, Helena, for his foolishness.

Hel. No, it is only your loveliness that is to blame. How I wish I were guilty in the same way!

Her. Be comforted. He shall not see my face anylonger. Lysender and I intend to depart quickly from Athens. This city was, as it were, a heaven to me before I met and loved Lysander. It has become a hell now that, having seen and loved him, I am not allowed to meet him. Such indeed are the qualities which dwell in my love and for which you envy me.

Lys. Helena, we shall disclose our secrets to you. We have planned to escape through the gates of Athens to-morrow night, when the new moon is reflected in the waters, and its bright beams turn every dew-drop into a glisten-ing gem; it is a time when the flight of lovers is not discovered.

Her. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon *faint*[1] primrose-beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their *counsel*[2] sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,
To seek new friends and stranger *companies*.[3]
Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us;
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!
Keep word, Lysander: we must *starve*[4] our sight
From lovers' food[5] till morrow deep midnight.

Lys. I will, my Hermia. [*Exit Herm.*
Helena, adieu:
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! [*Exit.*

[1] pale.
[2] in most secrets.
[3] companions.
[4] deprive.
[5] the sight of each other.

Her. We shall meet each other in that part of the wood where often you and I used to lie upon beds of pale primroses and disclose to each other all our inmost thoughts. And we shall leave Athens and go and mix with unknown faces and in the society of strangers. Farewell, sweet companion of my childhood. Pray for us. May you be fortunate in attracting the love of Demetrius. Lysander, keep your promise. Till to-morrow night, we must not see each other.

Lys. I will keep my promise, beloved. (*Exit* Hermia). Farewell, Helena; and may Demetrius love you as devotedly as you love him.

Hel. How happy some o'er *other some*[1] can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know:
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, *admiring of*[2] his qualities:
Things base and vile, *holding no quantity*,[3]
Love can *transpose*[4] to form and dignity:
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement *taste*;[5]
Wings and no eyes *figure*[6] *unheedy*[7] haste:

[1] others.
[2] admiring.
[3] their real value is out of proportion to the exaggerated value which love puts upon them.
[4] transmuted.
[5] devoid of judgment.
[6] stand for.
[7] rash.

Hel. How much more happiness falls to the lot of some people than is given to others! Throughout Athens, I am regarded as beautiful as Helena; but of what avail is that to me when Demetrius thinks otherwise and obstinately refuses to believe what every one else can see. And as he is mistaken while worshipping Hermia's beauty, so am I in admiring his qualities. Love's alchemy can transmute base and ignoble qualities "bearing no proportion to what they are estimated at by love" into noble and dignified things. Love looks with the heart instead of with the eyes, and hence the little Love-god is represented sightless. Nor has Love's mind the least touch of critical faculty; therefore Cupid is pictured as winged and eyeless, which symbolizes that love is guided by impulses rather than by reason and is, therefore, hasty nd thoughtless in its choice.

And therefore is love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft *beguiled*,[1]
As waggish boys *in game*[2] themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere:
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's *eyne*,[3]
He *hail'd down*[4] oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a *dear expense*:[5]
But herein mean I to *enrich my pain*,[6]
To have his sight thither and back again. [*Exit.*

[1] cheated [2] for mere fun, [3] eyes. [4] poured down as thick as hail.

[5] dearly bought. [6] (*a*) reward myself for the pain. Or (*b*) increase my pain.

Cupid is represented as a child and rightly so, for love is often deceived in its choice as children are. Just as children for mere sport say many things which they do not really mean, so young Cupid forswears himself again and again. Before Demetrius was attracted by Hermia's beauty, he made plentiful vows that he was mine; and when the love kindled by the sight of Hermia began to warm his heart, his vows melted away. I will go and tell him that Hermia intends to flee from Athens, and he is then certain to follow her to the forest to-morrow night. If I receive thanks for this information, they are dearly bought. But I shall at least be able to see him on his journey there and back again, which will be a compensation for me pain, (though my giving this information to Demetrins will bring him and my rival together which is very painful to me.) (*Exit*).

SCENE II. *Athens.* QUINCE'S *house.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Quin. Is all our company here?

Bot. *You were best*[1] to call them *generally*,[2] men by man, according to the *scrip*.[3]

Quin. Here is the *scroll*[4] of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our *interlude*[5] before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

Bot. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats *on*,[6] then read the names of the actors, and so *grow to a point*.[7]

Quin. *Marry*,[8] our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

[1] It were best for you.
[2] severely.
[3] the written list of actors.
[4] schedule.
[5] play.
[6] of.
[7] come to the point.
[8] by Mary.

SCENE II. *Athens.* QUINCE'S *house.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT *and* STARVELING,

Quin. Are all our actors present?

Bot. You had better call out each man's name separately according to the list.

Quin. Here are written down the names of those who are thought fit, throughout Athens, to act in the little play before Theseus and his bride on the evening of their marriage.

Bot. First of all, tell us, good Peter Quince, what the play is about; then you should call out the names of the actors, and so come to the point.

Quin. Well then, the play is "The most sorrowful tragedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby."

Bot. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, *spread yourselves.*[1]

Quin. Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bot. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quin. A lover, that kills himself most *gallant*[2] for love.

[1] stand separately.

[2] gallantly.

Bot. And a capital play it is, and a very amusing one, I can tell you. Now, my worthy friend, read out the names of the players according to your list. Do not crowd together but stand separately.

Quin. All respond when I call out your names. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bot. Here I am, tell me what part I am to play, and go on.

Quin. The part of Pyramus is assigned to you.

Bot. What sort of person is he? A lover, or a ranting, swaggering fellow?

Quin. Pyramus is a lover who most nobly dies for love.

Bot. That will *ask*[1] some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will *condole*[2] in some measure. To the *rest*:[3] yet my *chief humour is for a tyrant*:[4] I could play *Ercles*[5] *rarely*,[6] or a part *to tear a cat in*[7] to make all *split*.[8]

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And *Phibbus' car*[9]
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates

[1] call for.
[2] lament.
[3] go on to the others.
[4] suited by temperament to act a tyrant.
[5] Hercules.
[6] excellently.
[7] to tear a passion to tatters.
[8] split the ears of the audience.

Bot. A part like that, if well performed, will make the audience weep; they shall have to be careful about their eyes if I am to play it, (else they will weep their very eyes out.) I will arouse violent passions. I will lament in some measure. But I am temperamentally fit to play the part of a tyrant. I could do Hercules splendidly, or a part in which there is plenty of rant and swagger and violence.

" The frenzied cliffs and shattering crashes shall break open the locks of the prison doors; in the distance the chariot of the sun-god Phœbus shall shine, and uphold or destroy the foolish Destinies."

[9] the chariot of the sun god, Phoeous.

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' *vein*,[1] a tyrant's vein; a lover is more *condoling*.[2]

Quin. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flu. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Flute, you must *take* Thisby *on*[3] you.

Flu. What is Thisby? a *wandering knight*?[4]

Quin. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flu. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming.

Quin. *That's all one*[5]: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as *small*[6] as you will.

[1] the style of.
[2] pathetic.
[3] undertake the part of.
[4] knight errant.
[5] does not matter in the least.
[6] in a female tone.

Would not this be sublime? Now call out the names of the rest of the players. That is indeed a fiery speech, in the very strain of Hercules, or a blustering hero. A lover would have to be more pathetic and mournful.

Quin. Francis Flute, the repairer of bellows.

Flu. Here I am, Peter Quinee.

Quin. You must play the part of Thisby.

Flu. What sort of person is Thisby? Is it a Knight-errant?

Quin. It is the lady whom Pyramus has to love.

Flu. Pray, do not give me a female part; my beard is just growing.

Quin. That does not matter in the least. You will wear a mask, so that your heard will not be seen; and you can speak in soft feminine tones.

Bot. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice, 'Thisne, Thisne;' 'Ah Pyramus, my lover dear!' thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

Quin. No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby.

Bot. Well, proceed.

Quin. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Star. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father. Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play *fitted*[1].

[1] fitted with a suitable cast.

Bot. If I am permitted to mask my face, I shall take that part too. My tones shall be most soft and gentle, such as this:— "Thisne, Thisne; ah, my beloved Pyramus, I am thy lady and thy love:"

Quin. That will not do at all; you should keep to your part of Pyramus; Flute must play Thisby.

Bot. Very well; go on.

Quin. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Star. Here I am, Peter.

Quin. You are to play the part of Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the Tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Pyramus' father is your part, and I will play Thisby's father. You, Snug, the carpenter, are to play the lion; and now I think that the cast of the play is complete.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quin. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bot. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'

Quin. *An*[1] you should do it too terribly, you would *fright*[2] the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

All. That would hang us, every mother's
son.

[1] if.
[2] frighten.

Snug. Have you got the lion's part written? If so, give it to me now; for it takes me long to learn anything.

Quin. Oh, you can do that without preparation, for all you have to do is to roar.

Bot. Let me play the part of the lion too: I will do the roaring so beautifully that every one will be delighted to hear me, and Duke Theseus will himself say, "Let him roar again."

Quin. If you did it too terribly, you would frighten the dutchess and the ladies so that they would scream with terror, and that will be enough to send us all to the gallows.

All. Yes, indeed, every one of us would be hanged.

Bot. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will *aggravate*[1] my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you *an, 'twere*[2] any nightingale.

Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a *paper*[3] man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

Bot. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quin. Why, what you will.

Bot. I will *discharge*[4] it in either *your*[5] straw-colour beard, your *orange-tawny*[6] beard, your *purple-in-grain*[7] beard, or your *French-crown-colour beard*,[8] your perfect yellow.

[1] mitigate.
[2] as if it were.
[3] handsome.
[4] perform.
[5] which you know.
[6] dark-yellow.
[7] fast-red.
[8] light-yellow.

Bot. I admit, my friends, that if all the ladies should be terrified out of their senses, they would have no choice but to hang us. But I will so soften my tones that it will sound as gentle as the cooing of a dove; it will be as sweet as the song of a nightingale.

Quin. You can play no other part than Pyramus, for Pyramus is a handsome man, as fine-looking as one might meet with in a summer day. He is a splendid man and so you must take that part.

Bot. Very well, I will play it. What kind of beard do you think I should wear, in playing that part.

Quin. Well, any beard you choose.

Bot. I will perform it in either a pale yellow, a deep yellow, a purple-coloured or a pure yellow beard, the colour of a French crown.

Quin. Some of your French *crowns*[1] have no hair at all,. and then you will play barefaced. But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to *con*[2] them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be *dogged*[3] with company, and our *devices*[4] known. In the meantime I will *draw a bill*[5] of *properties*,[6] such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

Bot. We will meet; and there we may rehearse most *obscenely*[7] and courageously. Take pains: be perfect: adieu.

Quin. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bot. Enough; *hold or cut bow-strings*[8]

[*Exeunt.*

[1] heads.
[2] learn.
[3] valued closely.
[4] plans for the play.
[5] write out a list.
[6] state requisites
[7] obscurely and unseen.
[8] keep your words or be disgraced.

Quin. And some French "Crowns" are without hair, and then you will act bareforced. Well, my friends, here are your parts and I request you to learn them by heart by to-morrow night. Meet me in the Duke's forest, a mile from the city, and we shall practise our parts together by moonlight; for if we practise in Athens, people will follow us and come to know our plans. In the meantime I will make a list of the costumes and other requirements for our play. I pray you, do not fail to keep your promise.

Bot. We will meet in the wood, and there practise our parts quite obscurely and without fear of interruption. Work well at your parts and learn them without a mistake. Farewell,

Quin. At the Duke's oak we shall meet together.

Bot. That is all; we meet, whatever happens.

(*Exeunt*).

ACT II.

Scene I. *A wood near Athens.*

Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy, *and* Puck.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fai. Over hill, over dale,
Thorough[1] bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over *pale*.[2]
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve thy fairy queen,
To *dew*[3] her *orbs*[4] upon the green.
The cowslips tall her *pensioners*[5] be
In their *gold coats*[6] *spots*[7] you see;
Those be rubies, fairy *favours*,[8]
In those freckles live their *savours*[9]:

[1] through.
[2] enclosure.
[3] bedew.
[4] fairy rings.
[5] attendance.
[6] yellow blossoms.
[7] freckles.
[8] marks left by fairies
[9] scent.

ACT II.

Scene I. *A wood near Athens.*

Enter from opposite sides, a Fairy *and* Puck.

Puck. Well, fairy, where are you wandering?

Fairy. I roam over hill and dale, over fences and the lands they enclose; through the brushwood and thorny shurbs, through flame, or through water—I go wherever I please; I travel through the world more speedily than the orbed moon in the skies; and I serve the fairy queen and sprinkle dues on the fairy rings for her. The tall cowslips are her body-guard. They are gorgeously dressed in gold, with spots of crimson like glowing rubies. These are bright love-tokens from the fairies. Their odour remains hidden in these pots.

I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou *lob*[1] of spirits; I'll be gone :
Our queen and all her elves come here *anon*.[2]
Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night :
Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
For Oberon is *passing fell*[3] and *wrath*,[4]
Because that she as her attendant hath
A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king ;
She never had so sweet a *changeling* ;[5]
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of this train,[6] to *trace*[7] the forests wild ;
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers and makes him *all her joy*:[8]

[1] clown.
[2] shortly.
[3] exceedingly angry.
[4] wroth.
[5] stolen child.
[6] leader of his attendants.
[7] wander through.
[8] sole object of joy.

I must go and seek dew-drops to adorn the cowslips with. Farewell, clown among fairies.

I must depart; Queen Titania with all her train of spirits will be here immediately.

Puck. The king has decided to hold his sports here to-night. Take care that Titania may not come within his sight. Oberon is exceedingly angry because she refuses to give up to him a beautiful boy whom she keeps as her attendant and whom the fairies stole from an Indian Prince. He is the sweetest mortal child that was ever brought to the fairyland. The jealous king would like to have the child to attend on him as the leader of his followers and to wander through the woods in his train. But the queen resists all his attempts, adorns the boy with sweet blossoms, and makes him the sole object of her delight.

And now they never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight *sheen*,[1]
But they do *square*,[2] that all their elves for fear
Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.
Fai. Either I mistake your shape and *making*[3] quite,
Or else you are that *shrewd*[4] and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow : are not you he
That frights the maidens of the *villagery*;[5]
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the *quern*[6]
And *bootless*[7] make the *breathless*[8] housewife churn :
And sometime make the drink to *bear no barm* ;[9]
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their *harm*[10]
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he ?

[1] brightness.
[2] quarrel
[3] appearance.
[4] mischievious.
[5] collective noun.
[6] handmill.
[7] without result.
[8] on account of exertion
[9] produce no yeast.
[10] troubles

And now whenever they meet in the forest or on the meadow, by the transparent waters of the fountain or by the light of the shining stars, they quarrel with each other so fiercely that their attendant fairies through fear steal into the acorn cups for shelter.

Fairy. If I do not, mistake your appearance and shape, you are the naughty and mischievous spirit known as Robin Goodfelow. It is you who sometimes alarm the country maids, grind corn in the handmill, steal the cream from milk, and, getting into the churn, baffle all labour of the house-wife who becomes breathless with vain exertion. It is you who sometime prevent the beer from producing any yeast and lead astray the benighted travellers and simply laugh at their misfortunes. But you do the work of those who affectionately call you Hobgoblin and Sweet Puck, and they are sure to have good luck. Have I not guessed rightly ?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I *jest to*[1] Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and *bean-fed*[2] horse *beguile*,[3]
Neighing in likeness of a *filly foal*:[4]
And sometime lurk I in a *gossip's bowl*,[5]
In very likeness of a roasted *crab*,[6]
And when she drinks, against her lips I *bob*[7]
And on her wither'd *dewlap*[8] pour the ale.
The wisest *aunt*,[9] telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for *three-foot*[10] stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from beneath, down topples she,
And '*tailor*'[11] cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole *quire*[12] hold their hips and
laugh,
And *waxen*[13] in their mirth and *neeze*[14] and swear
A merrier hour was never *wasted*[15] there.
But, room now, fairy! here comes Oberon.

[1] act as clown to. [2] strong and frolicsome. [3] deceive. [4] young mare. [5] christening cup [6] wild apple. [7] jump up. [8] the loose skin hanging from the throat (generally of animals) [9] old woman. [10] three-legged.

Puck. Yes, you are right. I wander at night playing my mischievous pranks. I act as a jester to Oberon, and sometimes amuse him, by assuming the shape of a young mare and neighing like it to deceive an over-fed, high-spirited horse. Sometimes I take the exact form of a roasted wild apple which they put in the ale, and lie concealed in the cup of beverage called 'Gossip's cup', and when the old woman is about to drink, I jump up against her mouth and spill the ale over the folds of skin loosely dangling from her neck. Sometimes I take the shape of a three-legged stool and as the old dame begins her most melancholy tale, I slip from under her and down she rolls suddenly, crying "Tailor," and is seized with a fit o coughing. It makes the whole assembly laugh. At last, they have to hold their sides, and sneeze, until they vow they never passed a more amusing time. But stand aside now; here comes the king.

[11] an ejaculation, common in those days, after a sudden fall from a chair. [12] assembly. [13] increase. [14] sneeze. [15] spent.

Fai. And here my mistress. Would that he were gone !

Enter, from one side, OBERON *with his train ;*
from the other, TITANIA *with hers.*

Ob. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

Tita. What, jealous Oberon ! Fairies, *skip*[1] hence :
I have forsworn his bed and company.

Obe. Tarry, rash wanton : am not I thy lord ?

Tita. Then I must be thy lady : but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,
And in the shape of *Corin*[2] sat all day,
Playing on pipes of *corn*[3] and *versing love*[4]
To amcrous *Phillida.*[5] Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest *steppe*[6] of India ?

[1] let us be off.
[2] a conventional name for a shepherd.
[3] oat straws.
[4] singing love songs.
[5] a conventional name for a shepherdess.
[6] (*a*) plain. (*b*) hill.

Fairy. And Queen Titania approaches too. I wish Oberon were elsewhere.

Enter, from one side, OBERON, *with his train; from the other,* TITANIA *with hers.*

Obe. It is unfortunate we have met in the moonlight, haughty Queen.

Tit. What, is that you, jealous Oberon. Fairies, let us be off and leave him to himself, because I have vowed to shun his bed and his company.

Obe. Stay, reckless one. Am I not your lord ?

Tit. If so, then I ought to be your lady. But I am well acquainted with the occasions on which you have secretly left the fairy-land in pursuit of other ladies. I have seen you, in the form of a shepherd, addressing love-poems to a fair shepherdess, and on your oaten pipes playing sweet music to her.

But that, forsooth, the *bouncing*[1] Amazon,
Your *buskin'd*[2] mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To *give their bed*[3] joy and prosperity.
Obe. How canst thou thus *for shame*,[4] Titania,
Glance at my *credit*[5] with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the *glimmering*[6] night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?
And make him with fair Ægle break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa?
Tita. These are the *forgeries*[7] of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's *spring*,[8]
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By *paved*[9] fountain or by rushy brook,

[1] blustering.
[2] having boots worn in war or in chase or by tragic actors.
[3] bless their marriage with.
[4] without being ashamed.
[5] influence
[6] faintly illuminated.

And the only reason why you have come from the farthest mountains of India to this place is that your booted, swaggering warrior maiden Hippolyta is about to marry Duke Theseus; so you havecome here to bestow on them good gifts at their marriage.

Obe. How can you without being ashamed hint at the favour in which Hippolyta holds me, when you well know that I am aware of your affection for the Duke? Is it not a fact that you led him astray through gleaming darkness and made him false to many women whom he loved, such as Perigenia, Aegle, Ariadne and Antiopa?

Tit. All these stories are mere calumnious inventions of jealousy. Since the beginning of midsummer, whenever we have met each other, either in the forest or the meadow, in the valley or on the mountain slope, by the fountain as it sparkles on the bright pebbles, or on the

[7] malicious inventions. [8] beginning. [9] with a pebbly bottom.

Or in the *beached*[1] *margent*[2] of the sea,
To dance our ringlets[3] *to* the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, *piping*[4] to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious[5] fogs; which failing in the land
Have every *pelting*[6] river made so proud
That they have *overborne*[7] their *continents*:[8]
The ox hath therefore *stretch'd his yoke*[9] in vain,
The ploughman *lost his sweat*,[10] and the green corn
Hath rotted *ere his youth attain'd a beard*;[11]
The *fold*[12] stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the *murrion*[13] flock;

[1]formed by a beach. [2]margin. [3]to form our fairy rings by dancing. [4]whistling. [5]pestilential. [6]petty. [7]overflowed. [8]banks. [9]dragged the plough. [10]wasted his labour.

banks of the stream bordered with green rushes or on the beach which fringes the sea where we have gone to form our fairy-rings by dancing—whenever we have met, our frolics have been interrupted and spoiled by your persistent quarrels. Therefore the winds, finding that we have not danced when they piped to us, have taken vengeance by driving cold sea-fogs laden with diseases. These, again, descending as rain, have so swollen the streams that they overflow their banks. The ox has laboured in vain in dragging the plough and the ploughman has wasted his efforts; the corn is destroyed before it is ripe; the flocks no longer feed in the pastures which are now under water but die of disease, and their bodies are thrown out to be the food for crows.

[11] before it ripened. [12]sheepfold. [13]stricken with disease.

The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
And the quaint *mazes*[1] in the *wanton*[2] green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable :
The human mortals *want*[3] their winter here,
No night is now with hymn or carol blest :
Therefore the moon, the governess of *floods*,[4]
Pale in har anger, *washes*[5] all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound :
And thorough this *distemperature*[6] we see
The seasons alter : hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old *Hiems'*[7] *thin*[8] and *icy*[9] crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set : the spring, the summer,
The *childing*[10] autumn, angry winter, change
Their *wonted liveries*,[11] and the *mazed*[12] world,
By their *increase*,[13] now knows not which is which :

[1] tracks
[2] playful.
[3] are without.
[4] tides.
[5] charges with moisture.
[6] (*a*) disorder of the weather. (*b*) quarrel (God of winter.)
[7] winter.
[8] thinly covered.
[9] white.
[10] productive.
[11] usual dress.
[12] amazed.
[13] produce

No longer can the lines and patterns, where the shepherds play their games such as Nine men's Morris', be traced for the squares and labyrinths are filled up with mud; and the antic track in the luxuriant grass is undistinguishable for no human foot treads the place now. Again when winter comes, people are unable to enjoy their usual winter amusements and sing no scared songs at Christmas-tide. Therefore the moon, who controls the ebb and flow of tides, pale in her anger at the neglect of our rites, fills the air with moisture so that diseases such as colds, caughs etc. have brokenout. The very character of the seasons is changed, chill and nipping hoar-frost falls on the blossoming roses; and old Winter's head is adorned with the sweat-scented wreaths of summer blooms, as though to mock his age. The spring, the summer, the fertile autumn and the fierce winter have changed their usual garments and the people can no longer tell one season from another by its produce.

And this same progeny of evils comes
From our *debate*,[1] from our dissension;
We are their parents and *original*[2].

Obe. Do you amend it then; it *lies*[3] in you:
Why should Titania *cross*[4] her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my *henchman*[5].

Tita. Set your heart at rest:
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a *votaress of my order*:[6]
And, in the *spiced*[7] Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she *gossip'd*[8] by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked *traders*[9] on the *flood*[10],
When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;

[1] quarrel.
[2] origin.
[3] rests.
[4] displease.
[5] page.
[6] devotee of mine.
[7] fragrant with spices.
[8] spent the time in familiar talk.
[9] merchant vessels.
[10] sea.

All this is the result of the quarrel between us and of our continued disagreements; we are the sole cause and source of all these calamities.

Obe. Then remedy it; the cure lies entirely in your hands. There is no reason why Titania should quarrel with her husband. I only beg of you a little boy, whom I should like to be a page of mine.

Tit. Rest assured that I will not part with him though you should offer me your kingdom. His mother was one who had taken the vow of serving me. Many times in India we have sat and conversed together, breathing the fragrant air of the evening and from the sea-beach we have watched the merchant ships on the ocean and laughed to see the sails swelling out as the play ful and amorous wind blew them into graceful curves.

[1]undulating motion.
[2]copying

Which she, with pretty and with *swimming gait*[1]
Following[2],—her womb then rich with my young squire,—
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return agian,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

[3]to stay.

Obe. How long within this wood intend you *stay*[3]?

[4]dance.

Tita. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.
If you will patiently dance in our *round*[4]
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;

[5]not frequent.

If not, shun me, and I will *spare*[5] your haunts.

Obe. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

She would, with her pretty undulating motion, imitate the slow and stately motion of the ships by going some distance and returning to me with something in her hands, as though coming back from a vogage laden with commodities of commerce. But being mortal, she died, when this child was born; and I bring up the boy only for her sake, and for her sake I will never part with him.

Obe. How long do you intend to stay in this forest?

Tit. I shall most probably remain until after the marriage of the Duke. You may accompany us if you will dance with us and watch our moonlight sports. If you will not, avoid my company and I shall likewise be careful not to go to your favourite places.

Obe. I will go with you if you hand over that boy to me.

Tita. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!
We shall *chide downright*,[1] if I longer stay.
[*Exit Titania with her train.*

Obe. Well, go thy way: thou shalt *not*[2] from this grove
Till I torment thee for this *injury*.[3]
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since[4] once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such *dulcet*[5] and harmonious *breath*[6]
That the *rude*[7] sea grew *civil*[8] at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their *spheres*,[9]
To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck I remember.

[1] have a regular quarrel.
[2] go.
[3] insult.
[4] when.
[5] sweet
[6] songs.
[7] rough.
[8] quiet.
[9] orbits.

Tita. Never, although you should give me your whole kingdom. Depart quickly, my fairies. If I remain here longer, we shall have a regular quarrel.

[*Exit* TITANIA *with her Train.*]

Obe. Well, you may leave, but before you are out of the wood, I shall teach you a lesson for the contemptuous treatment. Come, my gentle Puck. You remember the time when once, seated on a lofty cliff overlooking the sea, I listened to a charming sea-maiden carried over the waves by a dolphin. So sweet and charming was her song that the rough sea grew calm; the stars shot out of their appointed course to hear the bewitching strains of that maiden.

Puck. I do remember it all.

Obe. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid *all arm'd*:[1] a *certain*[2] aim he took
At a *fair vestal*[3] throned by the west,
And *loosed*[4] his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As[5] it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
But I *might*[6] see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd[7] in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial *votaress*[8] passed on,
In maiden meditation, *fancy-free.*[9]
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little *western*[10] flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,

[1] with bow and arrows.
[2] sure.
[3] fair virgin Queen Elizabeth
[4] let go.
[5] as if.
[6] was able te.
[7] lose its power.
[8] one vowed to chastity.
[9] free from love.
[10] English

Obe. That very time, though the sight was hidden from your eyes, I noticed the little love-god fully equipped with bow and arrow, flying between the dispassionate moon and this world of ours. He took a deliberate aim at at a lovely virgin in a western land, and shot his arrow with such force and precision that it appeared as if thousands of hearts would be wounded. But I was able to see that the fire of the arrow was extinguished in the cool and passionless moon-rays, and that the royal vestal passed on unruffled, her heart unmoved, untouched by thoughts of Love. Yet I noticed that the arrow of Cupid pierced a sweet flower in that western land. It was white as milk before, but now, wounded with the love-shaft, it showed a purple hue.

And maidens call it *love-in idleness.*[1]
Fetch me that flower ; the herb I shew'd
thee once :
The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid
Will make *or*[2] man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Ere the *leviathan*[3] can swim a league.
Puck. I'll *put a girdle round about*[4] the earth
In forty minutes. [*Exit.*]
Obe. Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon,
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On *meddling*[5] monkey, or on busy ape,
She shall pursue it with the *soul of love* :[6]

[1] pansy.
[2] either.
[3] the whale.
[4] travel round.
[5] mischievous.
[6] deepest love.

Maidens call this flower Love-in-Idleness. Bring me that sweet flower which I showed you on one occasion. It has this property that if its juice is poured in the eyes of a sleeping person, then that person will deeply fall in love with the first living creature which he or she sees on waking. Bring me the sweet flower and return before the whale has had time to swim three miles.

Puck. I will travel round the earth in forty minutes.

Obe. When I have this juice in my possession, I shall watch Titania and when she is asleep, I shall drop it in her eyes. And when she wakes again, she will fall in love most intensely with the first creature she looks upon, whether is a lion, a bear, a wolf, a bull or even a mischievous ape.

And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
As I can take it with another herb,
I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible;
And I will overhear their *conference*.[1]

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA *following him.*

Dem. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other *slayeth*[2] me.
Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood;
And here am I, and *wode*[3] within this wood;
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

[1] conversation.

[2] *i.e.*, by rejecting my love.

[3] mad.

Before I release her from this spell which I can do with the juice of another flower, I will make her hand over that boy to me. But see, here come some mortals. I shall be invisible to them and secretly hear their conversation.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA *following him.*

Dem. Do not follow me because I do not love you. Where are Lysander and beautiful Hermia? Lysander I would kill, while fair Hermia kills me with her ctuelty. You told me that they had escaped to this forest; and I am in the forest, and likely to go mad because I do not find my Hermia. Away, leave me and stop pursuing me.

Hel. You draw me, you hard-hearted
adamant;[1]
But yet you draw not *iron*,[2] for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you
Dem. Do I *entice*[3] you? do I *speak you fair*?[4]
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?
Hel. And even for that do I love you
the more.
I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What *worser*[5] place can I beg in your love,—
And yet a place of high *respect*[6] with me,—
Than to be used as you use your dog?

[1] loadstone.
[2] one whose heart is hard like iron.
[3] attract.
[4] praise your beauty.
[5] more abject.
[6] honour.

Hel. You attract me and I must follow you whose heart is as hard as adamant. Though you draw my heart, yet it is not a substance like iron, famed for its hardness, but a substance like steel famed for its truth. If you will abandon your power to draw, I shall not follow you.

Dem. I do not willingly attract you, nor encourage you by paying compliments to you. Do I not instead tell you plainly and truly that I have no love for you nor can I love you in future?

Hal. And even that draws my love more strongly. Like a dog, the more I am ill treated, the more fond I grow. Treat me as a dog, if you will, kick me, strike me, neglect me and forget me; but allow me to follow you though I am utterly unworthy. Can I beg of you a humbler positiont han to be treated as a dog by you? And even that I look upon as a place of honour.

Dem. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,
For I am sick when I do look on thee.
Hel. And I am sick when I look not on you.
Dem. You do *impeach*[1] your modesty too much,
To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust *the opportunity of night*[2]
And the *ill counsel*[3] of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.
Hel. Your virtue is my *privilege*[4] for that.
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my *respect*[5] are all the world:
Then how can it be said I am alone,
When all the world is here to look on me?

[1] lay open to attack
[2] the chance which night affords.
[3] evil designs.
[4] protection.
[5] eyes.

Dem. Do not try my patience too far. I dislike you from the core of my heart, and it makes me ill when I see you.

Hel. And I am sick when I am not allowed to see you.

Dem. You have left the city and thrown yourself into the hands of one who does not love you. This is highly objectionable and greatly mars your maidenly conduct. It is unwise to entrust a maiden's chastity to the opportunities afforded by night and to the evil suggesticns which this lonely place may provoke.

Hal. Knowing how virtuous you are, I have ventured to trust myself alone with you at such a time as this. There is no darkness when the light of your countenance is turned upon me, neither is this a solitary place, when I am in your company, for to me you are all the world None can therefore say that I am in a solitary place, when I see all the world.

Dem. I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.
Hel. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run *when you will*,[1] the story shall be changed:
Apollo flies, and Daphne *holds the chase*;[2]
The dove pursues the *griffin*;[3] the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger; *bootless*[4] speed,
When cowardice pursues and valour flies.
Dem. I will not *stay*[5] thy *questions*;[6] let me go:
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

[1] where you chose.
[2] maintains the pursuit,
[3] eagle.
[4] vain.
[5] wait for.
[6] talk.

Dem. I shall run into the thickets and hide myself, and you will be exposed to the fury of wild animals.

Hel. The fiercest of animals possesses a tenderer heart than you. Run where you will, and the old tales will be reversed: Apollo will no longer chase the beautiful nymph, Daphne, but he will flee and the nymph pursue him; the dove will chase the fierce griffin, the gentle deer will run swiftly after the tiger. All swifness is useless, when the strong flee and the weak pursue them.

Dem. I will not argue with you. Leave me alone and do not follow me. If you persist, I shall be driven to do you some injury before we leave this forest.

Hel. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your *wrongs*[1] do set a scandal on my sex:
We cannot fight for love, as men my do;
We should be woo'd and were not made to woo.
[*Exit Dem.*
I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*

Obe. Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him and he shall seek thy love.

Re-enter PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

[1] cruelty to me.

Hal. You do me injury everywhere, in the city, in the meadow, or in temples of worship. Shame upon you, sir. The injuri s you do to me disgrace my womanhood. Women should not be compelled to fight for love like men; they should not court men but men should court them. (Exit Demetrius) I will follow you though you should kill me. It would be a great bliss to die by the hand of one whom I love so well.

Obe. Farewell, maiden, he shall woo you ardently before you leave this forest, and you shall flee from him in your turn.

Re-enter PUCK.

Have you brought the flower? I welcome you, Puck.

Puck. Yes, here it is.

[1]blossoms. [2]covered over. [3]sweet scented. [4]sheds. [5]smooth and spotted. [6]garment. [7]touch. [8]fancy.

Obe. I pray thee, give it me.
I know a bank where the wild thyme *blows*,[1]
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite *over-canopied*[2] with *luscious*[3] woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake *throws*[4] her *enamell'd*[5] skin,
Weed[6] wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
And with the juice of this I'll *streak*[7] her eyes,
And make her full of hateful *fantasies*[8].
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;

Obe. Let me have it, please. I know a slope where the wild thyme blooms, and the pale cowslips and the modest violets with drooping heads grow. Covered over, as with a canopy, by fragrant honey-suckle, musk roses and sweet brier, Titania sleep there at night, lulled by the sweet fragrance of these flowers and the songs and dances of her fairies. There the snake casts off the glossy and variegated coat which it has outgrown—a tiny mantle, but still a garment large enough to form a coverlet for a fairy. While thus she lies asleep, I will smear her eye-lids with the juice of this herb, and that will make her full of undesirable fancies. You should also take some of the magic juice and find out through this forest a beautiful Athenian lady (Helena) who is in love with a haughty youth. Smear his eyes with

But do it when the next things he espies
May be the lady : thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care that he may prove
More *fond*[1] on her than she upon her love : [1]doting.
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another part of the wood.*

Enter TITANIA, *with her train.*

Tita. Come, now a *roundel*[2] and a fairy song;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence ;
Some to kill *cankers*[3] in the musk rose buds,
Some war with *rere-mice*[4] for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats, and some keep back

[2]dance. [3]worms that destroy flowers. [4]bats.

it and take care to do it at such a time that the lady may be the first thing he sees when he wakes. You shall be able to recognise the man by his Athenian dress.

Do it carefully, so that his love for her, when he sees her, may exceed even that which the lady has for him. And be careful to meet me before the cock crows for the first time.

[*Exeunt*].

SCENE II. *Another part of the wood.*

Enter TITANIA, *with her train.*

Tit. Come, now my fairies, let us have a dance and a song, and then depart for a few minutes. Some of you should seek out and kill the canker-worms that consume the rose-buds, some must try to catch the bats for the sake of their wings to make coats for my fairies, and some of you must prevent the noisy owl that shrieks at night being surprised at the appearance

The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
At our *quaint*[1] spirits. Sing me now asleep;
Then to your *offices*[2] and let me rest.

FAIRIES' SONG.

I.

First Fairy. You spotted snakes with *double*[3] tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts[4] and *blind-worms*,[5] do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen.

CHORUS.

Philomel,[6] with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:
Never harm,
Nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with *lullaby*.[7]

[1]fine.
[2]duties.
[3]forked.
[4]a kind of lizard.
[5]slow worms.
[6]nightingale.
[7]a song to send to sleep.

of delicately formed spirits. Now soothe me with music so that I may sleep. Then you should go to your respective duties and let me take rest.

The fairies sing.

Away, ye snakes, with forked tongues and skins covered with spots, do not appear, you prickly hedge-hogs; lizards and slow-worms do not trouble our fairy-queen. The nightingale's sweet music shall mingle with our lullaby. Let no ill approach, or enchantment bewitch our lovely Queen.

II.

Sec. Fairy. Weaving spiders, come not here ;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence !
Beetles black, approach not near :
Worm nor snail, do no offence.
Philomel, with melody, &c.

A Fairy. Hence, away ! now all is well :
One aloof stand sentinel.
[*Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.*

Enter OBERON, *and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.*

Obe. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take,
Love and *languish*[1] for his sake :
Be it *ounce*,[2] or cat, or bear,
Pard,[3] or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear

[1] pine.
[2] lynx.
[3] panther.

Away, you spiders weave your webs elsewhere. Away, all creeping insects ; do not disturb the sweet sleep of our lady. Let the nightingale sing with its sweet melody.

A Fairy. Depart now, now all is well. Let one of us stand apart as sentinel.

(*Exeunt fairies. Titania sleeps.*)

Enter OBERON, *and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.*

Obe. Whatever meets your eyes, when you awake, *take it to be your love* and pine for its affection. Whatever it may be, should it even be any of the wild beasts of the forest, that will appear to your eyes a suitable object of love.

When thou wakest, it is thy *dear*:[1]
Wake when some vile thing is near.
[*Exit*.

Enter LYSANDER *and* HERMIA.

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood:
And to speak *troth*,[2] I have forgot our way:
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And *tarry*[3] for the comfort of the day.
Her. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
For I upon this bank will rest my head.
Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one *troth*.[4]

[1] object of love.
[2] truth.
[3] wait.
[4] faith

May you awake at a time when some ugly and worthless one passes by.

Enter LYSANDER *and* HERMIA.

Lys. Fair Hermia, we are weary with our wanderings in the forest. To speak the truth, we have lost our way. We will rest here in the forest, if you think proper, and wait until the cheerful dawn arises.

Her. Just as you please. You should find out a resting-place for yourself, and I will sleep on this bank.

Lys. One grassy mound shall serve as a pillow for both of us. Since there is but one heart between us (*i.e.*, as we are one in heart) one bed will serve for us to lie upon; though there are two bosoms there is but one faith between us (*i.e.*, that which we have pledged to each other).

Her. Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.
Lys. O, *take the sense*,[1] sweet, of my innocence!
Loves takes *the meaning*[2] *in love's conference*[3].
I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit
So that but one heart we can make of it;
Two bosoms *interchained*[4] with an oath;
So then two bosoms and a single troth.
Then by your side no bed-room me deny;
For lying *so*,[5] Hermia, I do not *lie*[6].
Her. Lysander riddles very prettily:
Now much *beshrew*[7] my manners and my pride,
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.

[1] understand.
[2] the real meaning.
[3] when lovers talk.
[4] linked.
[5] by your side.
[6] guilty of no treachery.
[7] curse.

Her. I pray you, for my sake, lie at some distance: do not lie so near me.

Lys. "Understand the meaning of my innocence, or my innocent meaning. Let no suspicion of ill enter thy mind." True lovers understand each other without words; or Love supplies the true meaning when lovers converse. Our hearts are already so strongly bound together in love, that they are one; the vows of love and pledges of faith fill each bosom; so do not refuse me permission to lie by your side, for in lying by your side, I am guilty of no treachery.

Her. You give your words a double meaning with much grace, Lysander, but let mischief fall upon my bad manners and pride if in the words I used I meant to imply that Lysander was false, *i.e.*, I am not so ill-mannered and arrogant as to mean by what I said that Lysander was false. For the

But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
Lie further off; *in human*[1] *modesty*,
Such separation as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
So far be distant ; and, good night, sweet friend:
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

Lys. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I ;
And then end life when I end *loyalty*[2]!
Here is my bed : sleep give thee all his rest!

Her. With half that *wish*[3] the wisher's eyes be presse'd! [*They sleep.*

Enter Puck.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might *approve*[4]
This flower's force in stirring love.

[1] worth of human-beings.

[2] faithfullness in love.

[3] peace.

[4] test.

sake of that modesty which men and women should observe, remain at such a distance from me as may justly be said to be suitable to a virtuous bachelor and a maid. Good-night, beloved one ; and may your affection remain unaltered until the close of your dear life.

Lys. So be it, when I cease to be faithful and loving, may I cease to live. I will sleep here; may you enjoy all the blessings of sleep.

Her. May half of this peace be yours. [*They sleep.*

Enter Puck.

Puck. I have roamed throughout the forest but nowhere did I find any Athenian whose eyes I might anoint with the juice of this herb, and thus prove its efficacy in

Night and silence.—Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:
This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the *dank*[1] and dirty ground.
Pretty soul! she durst not lie
Near this *lack-love*[2], this kill-courtesy.
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth *owe*[3].
When thou wakest, let love *forbid*
Sleep his seat on they eyelid[4]:
So wake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon. [*Exit.*

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* HELENA *running.*

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

[1] damp.
[2] loveless person.
[3] possess.
[4] keep you awake.

---

stirring love in the heart of men. Nothing but silence and darkness surrounds me. Ah, here is some one. He wears garments after the Athenian fashion. This is he who rejected the love of the maiden; and the maiden is also sleeping soundly not far off on the damp and dirty ground. Fair maiden, she dares not lie too near this churlish fellow who is wanting in love, this boor who is utterly without good manners. Ungracious youth, I cast upon your eyes all the power which this charm (spell) possesses. Mayst thou be unable to sleep any more, for the pangs of unrequited love. I leave you to wake after I have gone with this result (*i.e.*, of your not being able to find sleep again): I must now go to Oberon.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* HELENA, *running.* [*Exit.*

Hel. Stop, dear Demetrius, though you kill me.

Dem. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Hel. O, wilt thou *darkling*[1] leave me? do not so.

Dem. Stay, *on thy peril*[2]: I alone will go. [*Exit*

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this *fond chase*[3]!
The more my prayer, the lesser is my *grace.*[4]
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;
For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;
For beasts that meet me run away for fear:
Therefore no *marvel*[5] though Demetrius
Do, *as a monster*[6], fly my presence thus.

[1] in the dark.
[2] at your risk.
[3] foolish pursuit.
[4] the kindness I meet.
[5] wonder.
[6] as that of a monster.

Dem. Depart I insist; and do not pursue me.

Hel. Do not leave me alone in the darkness, I pray.

Dem. Remain where you are, and do not dare to move; I shall myself depart. [*Exit.*

Hel. Alas! this mad pursuit has exhausted me, and the more fervently I ask, the less favour is shown to me. Hermia is far more happy than I, wherever she lies in the wood; for she possesses bright eyes. How is it that her eyes are so brilliant? They are not made so by glittering tear-drops; if that were so, mine would have been brighter because my eyes have been more frequently washed than hers. No, I am absolutely ugly; even the beasts run away from me for fear; therefore I need not wonder that Demetrius flies from me as from a monster.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia's *sphery eyne*?[1]
But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!
Dead? or asleep? I see not blood, no wound.
Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lys. [*Awaking*] And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.
Transparent Helena! Nature here shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, *what though*?[2]
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

[1] heavenly eyes.

[2] that does not matter.

How could any mirror be so wickedly treacherous as to make me think that my eyes rivalled the star-like orbs of Hermia? But I see someone lying near; it is Lysander. Is he lifeless, or only slumbering? I do not see any wound; I find no blood coming out. Awake, good Lysander, if you are alive.

Lys. (*Awakening*). For your love, dear lady, I would dare even the flames. Beautiful Helena, the transparency of your nature enables me to see your heart through your bosom. Where is Demetrius? O, how well does the bearer of that vile name deserve to perish at my hands.

Hel. Do not speak in this manner Lysander. What matters it if he loves your Hermia. Still Hermia loves you, you should therefore be calm.

Lys. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a *raven*[1] for a *dove*[2]?
The will of man is by his reason sway'd,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season:
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And *touching*[3] now *the point of human skill*,[4]
Reason *becomes the marshal*[5] to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I *o'erlook*[6]
Love's stories written in Love's richest book.

Hel. Wherefore was I *to*[7] this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,

[1] dark Hermia.
[2] fair Helena.
[3] having acquired.
[4] the highest human wisdom.
[5] shows the way to.
[6] read.
[7] to endure.

Lys. I wish no more for Hermia. I am devoutly sorry now that I ever wasted any time in her company. It is not Hermia who possesses my heart; it is Helena. Who is there so foolish as he, who would not like the gentle dove instead of the black, harsh-voiced raven. A man's intentions are governed by his intellect, and my intellect tells me you are far superior to Hermia. Things that grow do not attain maturity until their appointed time, so my intellect had not reached its fullest perfection when I loved Hermia. But now that I have acquired mature reason, it guides me straight to your bright eyes where I find all the precious affection of your heart.

Hel. Oh, why is it that I am born to endure such bitter irony? What have I done that you should thus heap insults upon me? Is it not ridicule enough for me that I cannot

That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must *flout*[1] my *insufficiency*[2]?
Good troth, you do me wrong, *good sooth*[3], you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well; perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true *gentleness*[4].
O, that a lady, of one man refused,
Should of another therefore be abused! [*Exit.*

Lys. She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there:
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
For as a *surfeit*[5] of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
Or as the *heresies*[6] that men do leave
Are hated most *of*[7] those they did deceive,

[1]mock. [2]want of power. [3]truly. [4]good breeding. [5]excess. [6]wrong beliefs. [7]by.

expect a single kind look from Demetrius. You have added to my sufferings by mocking my unattractiveness by your extravagant language. In truth, it is unkind of you to pretend to woo me with such a scornful language. Farewell, sir. I thought you were a truer gentleman. Alas, what misery that a poor maiden should be rejected by one man and insulted by another [*Exit.*

Lys. She did not see Hermia. Hermia, go on sleeping there and never approach me again. I hate you more than anyone else, as when we have excess of delicious food, we do not relish it at all, or as when we discover that we have been led astray by those opinions which once were our chiefest

So thou *my surfeit and my heresy*,[1]
Of all be hated, but the most of me!
And, all my powers, *address*[2] your love and
might
To honour Helen and to be her knight! [*Exit*

Her. [*Awaking*] Help me, Lysander, help me!
do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!
Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his *cruel prey*.[3]
Lysander! what, removed? Lysander! lord!
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;
Speak, *of*[4] all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
No? then I will perceive you are not nigh:
Either death or you I'll find immediately. [*Exit*.

[1] who are like a surfeit and a heresy to me.

[2] direct.

[3] the victim of its cruel attack.

[4] in the name of.

articles of faith. May Hermia be hated by everyone, but most of all by me; and now I will press every faculty I possess into Helena's service, and use all my might and energy to do her honour.

Her. (*Awaking*). Oh Lysander, help me in throwing away this hateful reptile which is creeping over me. Oh, what a terrible dream I have had. See, I am trembling with terror. I dreamed that a poisonous snake was preying on my heart, and you calmly smiled at my sufferings, Lysander, Lysander, have you moved away. Have you gone so far from me that you cannot hear my cries? Lysander! There is no answer. O, speak, if you hear my call, speak in the name of all the powers of love. I am faint with fear. He has gone, I see plainly; but I will find him quickly or die in the attempt.
[*Exit*.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *The wood. Titania lying asleep.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Bot. Are we all met?

Quin. *Pat, pat*[1]: and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our *tiring-house*;[2] and we will *do it in action*[3] as we will do it before the duke.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. What sayest thou, Bully Bottom?

Bot. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

[1] in the very nick of time.

[2] dressing room.

[3] not only recited but acted.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The wood. Titania lying asleep.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT *and* STARVELING.

Bot. Is every one here?

Quin. Yes, exact to the moment, and I have found a wonderfully suitable place for us to practise in. This green plot of land shall be our stage, this hawthorn thicket shall be our dressing room. Now let us perform the piece exactly as it will be done before Duke Theseus.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. Well, comrade, what is it?

Bot. There are some items in this play that will never please. The scene where Pyramus has to kill himself with his sword will never be tolerated by the ladies. How will you meet that objection?

Snout. *By'r lakin*[1], a *parlous*[2] fear.

Star. I believe we must leave the killing out, *when all is done.*[3]

Bot. Not a whit : I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

Quin. Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written *in eight and six.*[4]

Bot. No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

[1]by our lady the Virgin.
[2]perilous, alarming.
[3]after all.
[4]in lines of eight and six syllables alternately.

Snout. That is truly a terrible fear, by our lady (the Virgin Mary).

Star. I am afraid that part will have to be omitted, after all.

Bot. Not at all; I have a plan which will make everything go well. Let us have a few opening lines to introduce the play, and in the lines let us inform the people that we do not mean to execute any harm with our weapons and that Pyramus is not killed indeed. That they may be certain of this, let them know that it is I, Bottom the weaver, in reality, and not any Pyramus at all. That will surely set their fears at rest.

Quin. Well, we will have such a prologue, and it shall be written in alternate lines of eight and six syllables.

Bot. No, let them be all alike of eight syllables.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Star. I fear it, *I promise you*[1].

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in,—God shield us!—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing: for there is not a more fearful *wild-fowl*[2] than your lion living; and we ought *to look to 't*[3].

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bot. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same *defect*[4],—'Ladies,'—or, 'Fair ladies,—I would wish you,'—or, 'I would request you,'

[1] I can assure you.
[2] beast.
[3] be careful about.
[6] effect.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afraid of the lion?

Star. I fear they will be afraid, I can assure you.

Bot. Well friends, you should ponder over the matter among you. Heaven help us, it is a terrible thing to introduce a wild beast like that into the company of ladies. A lion is the most terrifying beast alive; we ought to be careful of what we are doing.

Snout. We must have another prologue which may inform the assembly that he is not a lion.

Bot. No, you must also tell the audience the name of the man and an opening should be left in his disguise, so that he may be partly seen through it. It would also be well if he spoke to them, and said something like this: "Sweet ladies," or "Fair dames, let me desire you," or "May I ask you",

—or, 'I would entreat you,—not to fear, not to tremble: *my life for yours*[1]. If you think I come hither as a lion, *it were pity of my life*[2]: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are:' and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

[1] I guarantee your safety.
[2] it would be a bad thing for me.

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things: that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snout. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

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or "Let me beg of you, not to be alarmed," or some words to that effect. He might say, "Let me be hanged, if any harm come to you. Do not imagine that I am really a lion; I am only a plain man." Then he may reveal his name.

Quin. Agreed; we will do that. But now we are faced with two chief difficulties; one is to arrange a moonlight scene inside the chamber; the lover meet by moonlight in the play.

Snout. Does the moon shine on the day when we are going to stage our play?

Bot. Bring me an almanac: Who has an almanac, to see whether there is a moon that night?

Quin. Yes, it will be moonlight that night.

Bot. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the *casement*[1]. 51

Quin Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to *disfigure*[2], or to *present*[3], the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the *chink*[4] of a wall.

Snout. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom? 58

Bot. Some man or other must present wall: and let him have some plaster, or some *loam*[5], or some *rough-cast*[6] about him, to signify wall; or let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

[1] window.
[2] personate.
[3] represent.
[4] hole.
[5] mortar, mixture of clay and sand.
[6] plaster of lime and gravel.

Bot. Then in that case, we shall simply leave the window wide open for the moonlight to shine inside the chamber where we play.

Quin. That will do, if not, one of us must represent the moon, with a lantern and a bush in his hand. Then we must have a wall in the chamber, for in the play the lovers talked through a chink in the wall.

Snout. It is impossible to set up a wall in the room. What do you think master Bottom?

Bot. Let one of us represent the wall. His dress must show some lime, or soil or mortar in some manner that the audience may know that he represents a wall. Let him spread his fingers to represent the chinks through which Pyramus and Thisbe converse.

Quin. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, *every mother's sons*[1], and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake: and so every one according to this *cue*[2].

Enter Puck *behind.*

Puck. What *hempen home-spuns*[3] have we swaggering here,
So near the *cradle*[4] of the fairy queen?
What, a play *toward*[5]! I'll be an auditor;
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

Quin. Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

Bot. Thisby, the flowers of *odious*[6] savours sweet,—

Quin. Odours, odours.

[1]every one of you.
[2]last word or phrase of a speech which was signal for a new actor to enter.
[3]rude rustics.
[4]resting place.
[5]about to begin.
[6]odorous.

Quin. If it can be arranged in that way, our difficulty vanishes. Now, let all of us rehearse our parts. Let Pyramus first begin When you have done with your speech, go into that thicket: then let each one after that follow on as his turn comes.

Enter Puck *behind.*

Puck. What are these coarse, rough creatures doing here—so near the couch of the fairy queen? Oh! I see a drama is going forward: I shall listen to it, and perhaps take part in it too, if I can find reason to do so.

Quin. Now begin, Pyramus. Come forward, Thisby.

Bot. Thisby, the fair blossoms give out odorous fragrance.

Quin. Odours fragrant, man.

Bot. —— odours savours sweet:
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.
But hark, a voice! stay thou but here a while,
And *by and by*[1] I will to thee appear. [*Exit.*

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here. [*Exit.*

Flu. Must I speak now? 79

Quin. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flu. Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,
Most brisky *juvenal*[2] and eke most lovely Jew,
As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,
I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

[1] almost directly.

[2] youth.

Bot. Breathe out fragrant odours; and thy sweet breath is like them, my beloved. But listen: I hear a sound. You stay here for a moment, and I will soon return to you.

Puck. [You will return] a much stranger Pyramus than the one who acted here. (You will be much changed when you return).

Flu. Is it my turn now?

Quin. Certainly: Pyramus will be back in a moment; he is only supposed to have gone to find out what sound it was.

Flu. Most beauteous Pyramus, whose countenance shows the fair whiteness of the lily and is combined with the glowing crimson of the rose growing on a thorny stem, brisk and lively youth, and also most handsome jew, faithful and tireless as an unflagging horse, I shall be at Ninny's grave to meet you there.

Quin. 'Ninus' tomb,' man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, *cues and all*[1]. Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, 'never tire.'

Flu. O,—As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

Re-enter PUCK, *and* BOTTOM *with an ass's head.*

Bot. If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.

[1] including the cues.

Quin. You must not say "Ninny;" it is "Ninus's grave." And you must not have spoken that line at all; that does not come until Pyramus has spoken again. You are saying all your lines together, and the words at the end of other people's speeches, too. Come along, Pyramus; you are behind your turn. You should enter and deliver your speech directly. Flute has uttered the words 'never tire.'

Flu. Oh: I will say that again, then—"tireless as an unflagging steed."

Re-enter PUCK, *and* BOTTOM *with an ass's head.*

Bot. Even if all you say be true, Sweet Thisby, that is, even if I am as fair as you say, I would still be yours.

Quin. Oh: what is this terrible thing? Let us flee from this place; there are evil spirits round us.

(*Exeunt* Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling).

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you *about a round*[1].
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a *fire*[2];
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.
[*Exit.*

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a *knavery*[3] of them to make me afeard.

Re-enter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

Bot. What do you see? *you see an ass-head of your own*[4], do you? [*Exit Snout.*

[1] dance.

[2] Will-o'-the-wisp.

[3] mischievous trick.

[4] you see as big a fool as yourself.

Puck. I will follow you, I will lead you a pretty dance; I will draw you out of your way through marshes, thorns and thicket; sometimes I will assume the form of a horse and sometimes that of a hound, or a hog or a bear. You will be deceived by hearing me cry like all these beasts in turn. I can also shine like a flame, and lead you astray as you follow the light. [*Exit.*

Bot. Why have they all disappeared? It is some vile trick of theirs to frighten me.

Re-enter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom, I see you altogether changed in appearance. What do I see on your head?

Bot. What is the matter? Do you see here as great a fool as yourself? [*Exit* Snout.

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art *translated*[1]. [*Exit.* 109

Bot. I see their knavery! this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. [*Sings.*

The *ousel cock*[2] so black of hue,
  With orange-tawny bill,
The *throstle*[3] with his note so *true*[4],
  The wren with *little quill*[5]—

Tita. [*Awaking*] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

[1]transformed
[2]male black-bird.
[3]song-thrush.
[4]sweet.
[5]small-feathers.

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quin. Heavens preserve thee Bottom! What a transformation!

Bot. Now I realise their trick. They wish to make a fool of me, and try to make me afraid by leaving me alone. I will not budge an inch from this place, whatever they may do to frighten me. I shall stay where I am, and sing, to let them know that I fear nothing.

(Sings.) The glossy blackbird, with its deep yellow beak, the melodious thrush, and the tiny-feathered wren.........

Tit. (*Awaking.*) What heavenly voice is this that arouses me from my sleep?

Bot. [*Sings*]

The finch, the sparrow and the lark,
The *plain song*[1] cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark
And *dares not answer nay*[2] :—

for, indeed, who would *set*[3] his wit to so foolish a bird? who would *give a bird the lie*[4], though he cry 'cuckoo' *never*[5] so?

Tita. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again :
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note :
So is mine eye *enthralled*[6] to thy shape ;
And *thy fair virtue's force*[7] perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

[1] without much variation.
[2] is unable to repel the charge.
[3] oppose
[4] tell it that it is lying.
[5] however often.
[6] made captives.
[7] the power of beauty.

Bot. (Sings.) The finch, the sparrow, and the soaring lark, the cuckoo with its chanting notes to which all men give heed, though none is able to repel the charge : and really, who would ever dream of arguing with a witless bird? Who will tell the bird that it is lying.

Tit. Oh : Let me hear those sweet strains again. I am enamoured of your sweet voice. I am also made captive by the beauty of your form, and the power of your beauty constrains me to vow that I adored you, the moment that my eyes beheld you ;

Bot. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days; the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not *make them friends*[1]. Nay, I can *gleek upon occasion*[2].

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bot. Not so neither: but if I had *wit*[3] enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to *serve mine own turn*[4].

Tita. Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate:
The summer still doth *tend upon my state*[5];
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;

[1] bring them more together.
[2] jest sometimes.
[3] wisdom.
[4] suit my purpose.
[5] acknowledges my sovereignty.

Bot. It does not seem to me, madam, that you have sufficient cause for that, but indeed, love and reason are not often found together in these times. All the great pity it is, that some good people do not try to bring them together again. You see, I can have my little joke now and then.

Tit. You are as wise as you are beautiful.

Bot. Not at all, madam; but if I had wisdom enough to get out of this forest, it would have been sufficient to suit my purpose.

Tit. Do not wish to go out of this wood. I shall force you to remain here, whether you like it or not. I am a fairy of no common rank; I have power to command the seasons, the summer flowers blossom at my will. I do love you, therefore, you should remain with me. I will make fairies to attend on

I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
Aud sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit *go*[1].
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, *and* MUSTRADSEED.

Peas. Ready.
Cob. And I.
Moth. And I.
Mus. And I.
All. Where shall we go?

[1] fly.

your person. They shall bring jewels for you from the ocean and they will sing you to sleep while you lie on flower-beds. And I will purify your human and material body until it shall be as light as air, and you shall also become a fairy spirit. Come, my fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed.

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, *and* MUSTARDSEED.

Peas. Here I am.

Cob. At your service.

Moth. And I also.

Mus. And I.

All. Where shall we go to serve you?

Tita. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop[1] in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with *apricocks*[2] and *dewberries*[3],
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the *humble bees*[4],
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To *have*[5] my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To *fan*[6] the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Peas. Hail, mortal!

Cob. Hail!

Moth. Hail!

Mus. Hail!

[1] dance
[2] appricots.
[3] blackberries.
[4] humming bees.
[5] bring.
[6] keep off.

Tit. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman. Dance before him as he walks, and display your gambol to amuse him. Bring him apricots and dewberries, purple fruit of the vine, mulberries and juicy figs to eat; rob the bees of their load of honey for him, and gather the wax from their laden thighs, to make candles for my beloved; and light them at the eyes of the fiery glow-worm to conduct my love to his bed, and to wait on him when he gets up, and try to keep off moonbeams from his eyes by the wings of bright coloured butterflies, while he sleeps. Bow before him, sweet fairies, and show him acts of courtesy.

Peas. Mortal, we welcome you!

Cob. Greeting!

Moth. Greeting!

Mus. Greeting!

Bot. I *cry your worships mercy*[1], heartily: I beseech your worship's name.

Cob. Cobweb.

Bot. I shall desire you *of*[2] more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall *make bold with*[3] you. Your name, honest gentleman?

Peas. Peaseblossom.

Bot. I pray you, commend me to Mistress *Squash*[4] your Mother, and to master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir?

Mus. Mustardseed.

[1] thank you.

[2] as regards.

[3] make use of your services.

[4] unripe peascod.

Bot. I heartily thank all of you; may I ask what is your honoured name?

Cob. Cobweb is my name.

Bot. I should like to know you better, kind sir, if I should cut myself, I shall take the liberty of using you. What are you called good master?

Peas. My name is Peaseblossom.

Bot. Pray give my compliments to your parents, sir, I wish to be well acquainted with you, too. What is your name, Sir, I beg?

Mus. I am called Mustardseed.

Bot. Good Master Mustardseed, I know *your patience*[1] well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house: I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed. 182

Tita. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

The moon methinks looks with a *watery*[2] eye;
And when she *weeps*[3], weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some *enforced*[4] chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another part of the wood.*

Enter OBERON.

Obe. I wonder if Titania be awaked;
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.

[1] what you have endured.

[2] on account of the vapours hanging round it.

[3] the moon causes the dew.

[4] violated.

Bot. My good fellow, I am well acquainted with the trials you have to endure; many a one of your family has been brought to his death by huge master Beef; I can assure you that the members of your family have often brought tears into my eyes. I shall desire to be more acquainted with you, sir.

Tit. Serve him well, my fairies; show him now the way to my chamber. The pale moon beams seem to threaten and shower; should those showers fall, the tiny blossoms will be drowned in tears, as though sorrowing for their fairness and chastity. Let my beloved be silent. Bring him silently to me.

SCENE II.—*Another part of the wood. Enter* OBERON.

Obe. I should very much like to know, first, whether Titania has awakened yet from her slumber, and next, what object was first presented to her sight which, from the potency of the drug, she will be compelled to love with ridiculous passion.

Enter Puck.

Here comes my messenger
How now mad spirit!
What *night-rule*[1] now about this haunted grove?
Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her *close*[2] and *consecrated*[3] bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of *patches*[4], *rude mechanicals*[5],
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.
The *shallowest thick-skin*[6] of that *barren sort*[7],
Who Pyramus *presented*[8], in their sport,
Forsook his *scene*[9] and enter'd in a brake:
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's *nole*[10] I fixed on his head:

[1]nocturnal revelry.
[2]secret
[3]sacred.
[4]fools.
[5]rough artisans.
[6]most empty brained blockhead.
[7]dull company.
[8]represented.
[9]stage.
[10]head.

Enter Puck.

Here comes my messenger. What is up now, O wild spirit, what news have you now of the doings in this wood, frequented by so many spirits?

Puck. Titania has fallen in love with a most terrible looking creature. Near to her secret and sacred resting place while she was sleeping soundly, a host of fools and rude artisans, that get their livelihood by such occupations as weaving, were assembled together to rehearse a play that was to be acted before the duke Theseus on his wedding day. The most empty brained blockhead of that dull lot, who acted the part of Pyramus that play, left the stage on which he was acting, and entered a thicket. While there I found an opportunity to clap an ass's head over his own. Presently he had to return,

Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my *mimic*[1] comes. When they him spy
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or *russet-pated choughs*,[2] many in *sort*,[3]
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever[4] themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
He murder cries and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to *do them wrong*;[5]
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some, sleeves; some, hats; *from yielders all things catch*.[6]
I led them on in this distracted fear,

[1]actor
[2]jack-draws.
[3]company.
[4]disperse.
[5]injure them.
[6]everything was caught from them who were ready to give up everything.

when it was time for him to reply to Thisbe's speech, and out marches my fine actor. As soon as they saw him, they fled from the spot, like a flock of wild geese who see the *bird-catcher* approaching stealthily to snare them or as a flight of gray-headed jackdaws, gathered together, fly upwards with loud cries at the sound of a gun-shot, quickly disperse, and in wildest terror dash hither and thither across the sky. One rolled over and fell in his haste to escape; another called out "Murder" and cried for help from the city. Their senses being thus weakened and bewildered by overpowering fear, even inanimate objects found courage to plague them. Some of the briers and thorns stripped them of their sleeves; some stripped them of their hats, which they yielded without a struggle as they ran. They being in this state of distraction, I led them hither and

And left sweet Pyramus translated there ;
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.
Obe. This falls out better than I could devise.
[1] smeared. But hast thou yet *latche'd*[1] the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do ?
Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too—
And the Athenian woman by his side ;
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

Enter HERMIA *and* DEMETRIUS.

Obe. Stand close ; this is the same Athenian.
Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.
Dem. O,why rebuke you him that loves you so ?
[2] words. Lay *breath*[2] so bitter on your bitter foe.

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thither in all directions. Meantime, the transformed actor of the lover's part remained where he was, and at that very moment it so happened that Titania awakened, and at once fell in love with the disguised clown.

Obe. This happened better than I hoped when I planned my stratagem. Did you also take captive the eye-sight of that young Athenian, with the magic herb, as I commanded you ?

Puck. I did it while he was sleeping with the fair lady not far off, so that whenever he should awake he could not help seeing her.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* HERMIA.

Obe. Step aside ; here is the very man ;

Puck. It is the lady I saw, but a different man.

Dem. Why do you reproach me so dearly, when my only fault is that I love you dearly ? You should reserve such cruel speeches for your enemies.

Her. Now I but chide; but I *should use*[1] thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, *plunge in the deep*,[2]
And kill me too.
The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me: would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bored and that the moon
May through the centre creep and so displease
Her *brother's*[3] noontide with the *Antipodes*.[4]
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so *dead*,[5] so grim.

[1]treat.

[2]plunge into the depths (of guilt).

[3]*i.e.*, the sun's.

[4]the opposite side of the earth.

[5]deadly.

Her. So far I only use reproach, you deserve worse treatment than this. If you have killed Lysander while he was sleeping, then kill me also. Having gone so far in guilt, you need not hesitate to go further still; make your guilt complete by killing me also. Lysander was as faithful to me as the sun, which never fails to return and woo the Day; he could never steal away leaving me asleep; I could as readily believe that a passage might be made through the centre of this globe, and that the Moon, gliding through it, should appear suddenly at the opposite side of the world, and attempt to rival the glow of her brilliant brother, the sun. It is plain that you have killed my Lysander, your very appearance, so pale and stern, is that of a murderer.

Dem. So should the murder'd look, and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty;
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder *Venus*[1] in her glimmering sphere.

Her. What's this to[2] my Lysander? where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Dem. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

Her. Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave *touch*![3]

[1] i.e. the planet Venus.
[2] what has this to do with.
[3] exploit.

Dem. I look like a murdered man whose heart has been pierced by the arrows of your cruelty, but you, who have murdered me, look so radiant and beautiful as that beauteous planet shining far above us.

Her. What has all this to do with my Lysander? Where is he gone? Will you tell me his whereabouts?

Dem. Sooner would I let my dogs devour his body

Her. Begone, villain: Away infamous hound: you enrage me beyond what is possible for a maiden to endure with calmness. Have you killed him? Henceforth be accounted a devil rather than a man. Pray tell me for my sake. Have you, who would not for a moment have dared to face him when awake, killed him in his sleep? O valiant deed: An adder,

Could not a *worm*,[1] an adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for *with doubler tongue*[2]
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.
Dem. You *spend*[3] your passion *on a misprised mood*;[4]
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.
Her. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.
Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore?
Her. A privilege never to see me more.
And from thy hated presence part I so;
See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [*Exit*

[1]represent.
[2]with greater treachery.
[3]waste.
[4]under a mistaken idea.

---

a serpent, any vile creeping thing could have ventured to sting a sleeping man. Indeed, a serpent did it; for no reptile with its double tongue ever dealt a more deadly wound than you.

Dem. You are venting much wrath and anger on an entirely mistaken idea; I have not killed Lysander, nor has any one else, as far as I know.

Her. Can you assure me that he is well.

Dem. What would you give me for such news?

Her. I would give you leave to avoid me henceforward. And thus I depart from the presence of one so detested: no matter whether Lysander lives or not, come near me no more. [*Exit.*

Dem. There is no following her in this *fierce vein*[1];
Here therefore for a while I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
For debt that *bankrupt*[2] sleep doth sorrow owe;
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his *tender*[3] here I make some stay.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Obe. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:
Of thy *misprision*[4] must perforce ensuse
Some true love *turn'd*[5] and not a false turn'd true.

Puck. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man *holding troth*[6],
A million fail, *confounding*[7] oath on oath.

[1] angry mood.
[2] which cannot pay.
[3] offer.
[4] mistake
[5] turned false.
[6] keeping faith.
[7] breaking.

Dem. It is of no use to pursue her while she is in this angry mood, so I will stay here for a while. The sorrow-laden heart feels its sorrow still more, when sleep refuses to come and banish woe for a while. Perhaps sleep may now choose to visit me; I will remain here and await its offer. (Lies down and sleeps).

Obe. You have made a complete mistake in what you have done. You have laid the love-juice on the eyes of some constant lover. The result of your mistake must be that some constant lover will have turned inconstant, instead of an incontant lover becoming constant, as I intended.

Puck. Then they are only acting in accordance with the decree of fate, which ordains that for every man that is true in love a million shall be false, breaking one oath after another.

Obe. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find :
All *fancy sick*[1] she is and pale of *cheer*[2],
With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear :
By some *illusion*[3] see thou bring her here :
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go; look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the *Tartar's*[4] bow. *[Exit*

Obe. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in *apple*[5] of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,

[1] love-sick.
[2] countenance.
[3] trick practised on her eyes.
[4] famous for their archery.
[5] the ball.

Obe. Go swiftly and search the wood in every direction and find out the Athenian maid, Helena. You will recognise her by her utterly pale and love-sick countenance. She has become utterly pale because her constant sighs and her unrequited love make a terrible drain on the resources of blood. (It was believed at that time that every sigh cost the sigher one drop of blood.) Manage to bring her here by some trick. In the mean time, I will lay the spell upon the eyes of this sleeping youth in anticipation of her arrival (so that when he wakes up he must look at her with eyes full of love.)

Puck. I go; see how I go swifter than the arrow shot from the bow of a Tartar.

(*Exit*)

Obe. O, Purple-coloured flower, which received the bolt of Cupid in its bosom, steep this youth's eyes in thy magic liquid.

(Squeezes the flower on Demetrius's eyelids.)

Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter PUCK

Puck. Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand ;
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for *lover's fee*[1].
Shall we their *fond pageant see?*[2]
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

Obe. Stand aside: the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one ;
That must needs be sport *alone*[3] ;
And those things do best please me
That befall *preposterously*[4].

[1] their kisses.
[2] display of foolish love.
[3] above all things.
[4] perversely.

Let his beloved appear as radiant in his eyes, as the beauteous planet (Venus) shining in the sky. O, Youth, if your beloved be near you, when you wake up, ask her to cure you by granting you her love.

Re-enter PUCK.

Puck. King Oberon, lady Helena is here at hand and the youth, whose eyes I moistened with the magic love-juice by mistake is beseeching her to return his love. Shall we look on at this foolish display of love ? O, my Lord, what fools these mortals are !

Obe. Stand aside, their noise will arouse the sleeping Demetrius.

Puck. Then a still more ridiculous show is sure to take place. two lovers wooing one and the same lady. It must be highly amusing ! Such ridiculous situations as spring up so unexpectedly are a source of great pleasure to me.

Enter LYSANDER *and* HELENA.

Lys. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?
Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?

Enter LYSANDER AND HELENA.

Lys. What makes you think that I am mocking at you when I beg your love? Scorn and hatred never show themselves in the guise of tears. If I were wooing you in sport, should I be weeping? I pledge you my faith with tears. When vows have such a birth, perfect truth manifests itself in their nativity. How can these things appear a mockery to you, when they bear the outward symbol of good faith in proof of their sincerity?

Hel. You make your cunning more and more conspicuous by the language you use. "If Lysander's present protestations are true, they destroy the truth of his former vows to Hermia, and the contest between these two truths, which in themselves are holy, must in the issue be devilish and end in the destruction of both". (*Wright*) Your troth is already plighted to Hermia; do you mean to throw her over? If you weigh the

Weigh oath with oath, and you will *nothing weigh*[1]:
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light *tales*[2].

Lys. I had no judgment when to her I swore.

Hel. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

Lys. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Dem. *[Awaking]* O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in *show*[3]
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!

[1] be weighing nothing at all.

[2] stories, fiction (as against truth).

[3] appearance

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worth of your oath to her with the worth of your oath to me, you will find that you are weighing nothing at all; each of the oaths being equally worthless.

Lys. When I vowed allegiance to Hermia, I was incapable of forming a just judgment.

Hel. You are equally injudicious now, when you turn away from her.

Lys. Demetrius loves Hermia and he does not love you.

Dem. (*Awaking.*) O, lovely Helena, divine and glorious being, to what I can liken those eyes of yours. Crystal is muddy in comparison with your bright eye. O, how ripe your lips show, growing like two cherries resting against each other, and tempting one to pluck them. The purest, whitest snow on

That pure congealed white, high *Taurus'*[1] snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, *turns to a crow*[2]
When thou hold'st up thy hand : O, let me kiss
This *princess*[3] of pure white, *this seal of bliss !*[4]

Hel. O spite ! O hell ! I see you all are bent
To *set against*[5] me for your merriment :
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must *join in souls*[6] to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not *use*[7] a gentle lady so ;
To vow, and swear, and *superpraise my parts*,[8]
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia :
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:

[1] a mountain.
[2] becomes black.
[3] paragon.
[4] *i.e.* the hand.
[5] join together against.
[6] agree together.
[7] treat.
[8] overpraise my qualities.

tops of the towering mountains appears black in comparison with your hand. Let me embrace this pure and beauteous being, this crown of all my joys.

Hel. Alas, what misery : I see you are all determined to *make a set* against me and mock and deride me. Had you the least knowledge of good manners or behaviour, you would never insult me. Is it not enough that you both dislike me, which I already know to be true, without agreeing together to hold me up to ridicule ? If you were real men, as you are in appearance, you would never treat a gentle maiden in this way, you would never flatter and overpraise me in this manner, and utter oaths and promises of love to one who is fully aware that you hate her from the core of your hearts. You rivalled each other in loving Hermia and now you rival each other in mocking Helena. It is a valiant feat, truly, a noble deed ; to

[1] neat, fine.
[2] wrest, teer out.
[3] nothing to do (with her.)
[4] with her.
[5] stayed. like a guest.
[6] to its real home.

A *trim*[1] exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin and *extort*[2]
A poor soul's patience; all to make you sport.

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love and will do till my death.

Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will *none*[3].
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart *to her*[4] but as *guest-wise sojourn'd*,[5]
And now to Helen is it *home*[6] return'd,
There to remain.

torment an unfortunate maiden with your mocking, No one having any nobility in him would offend a virgin in this way, and exhaust the power of endurance of one so forlorn as myself, simply to amuse himself.

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius, you should not be so. You love Hermia ; you know this as well as I know it. Most willingly and sincerely, I surrender to you any interest I had in her affections, if you, on your part, leave me all your share in Helena's love, to whom I have given my love for ever.

Hel. How idle is all your talk.

Dem. Lysander, you may keep Hermia for yourself. I will none of her, *i. e.*, I do not want to have anything to do with her, to have any part in her love. If ever I loved her, now all my love for her is gone. My heart with Hermia stayed for a short period as a guest does with his host, and now it has returned to its real home in Helena's bosom. There let it remain.

Lys. Helena, it is not so.

Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest, to thy peril, thou *aby*[1] it dear.
Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Re-enter HERMIA.

Her. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of *apprehension*[2] makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense.
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

Lys. Why should he stay, whome love doth *press*[3] to go?

[1] pay or atone for.

[2] *i.e.*, hearing.

[3] compel

Lys. This is not true, Helena.

Dem. Speak not slightingly of the love which you do not know, or you may have to pay dearly for your words. See, the maiden ~~approaching us is the one to whom you have paid~~ your vows.

Enter HERMIA.

Her. Though the gloomy darkness of the night makes it impossible for the eyes to see, yet it adds to the acuteness of the ear; just in so far as it robs us of the power of vision, it repays us by imparting to us a quicker sense of hearing. I have found you, Lysander, but not by the sense of sight; it was the sound of your voice which guided me here, for which I am grateful to my sense of hearing. But tell me, Lysander, why you were so unkind as to leave me sleeping.

Lys. Why should he stay, who is prompted by love to leave?

Her. What love could piess Lysander from my side?
Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him *bide*,[1]
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all you fiery *oes*[2] and *eyes of light*.[3]
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?
Her. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.
Hel. Lo, she is one of this *confederacy*![4]
Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three
To fashion this false sport, *in spite of me*.[5]
Injurious. Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
To *bait*[6] me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shared.

[1] stay
[2] orbs, circles.
[3] stars.
[4] conspiracy.
[5] at my expense.
[6] mock, torture.

Her. What kind of love could press you to leave me.

Lys. Yes, my own love compelled me to arise and follow her, Helena, whose loveliness beautifies this darkness, and shines more radiantly than all those stars shining in the heavens. Why do you follow me? Did you not understand that I left you because I hated you?

Her. That is surely untrue: you do not put your heart into your words.

Hel. Now I see that Hermia is also in league with my tormentors. They have united in this plot to make me the object of their ridicule, and to do me despite and annoyance. Unjust Hermia, most ungrateful maid, have you plotted with these two, to torment me so, and hold me up to scorn? Have

The *sisters' vows*,[1] the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—O, is it all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, *childhood*[2] innocence?
We, Hermia, like two *artificial*[3] gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one *sampler*,[4] sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both *in one key*,[5]
As if our hands our sides, voices and minds,
Had been *incorporate*.[6] So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming *parted*,[7]
But yet a union in partition;
Two lovely berries *moulded*[8] on one stem;
So, with two seeming bodies, one heart;
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,

[1] sisterly vows.
[2] childlike.
[3] creative.
[4] design.
[5] in one note.
[6] belonged to one body.
[7] separate.
[8] formed.

you forgotten our childhood affection for each other, when we asked and received help from each other in all our difficulties; when we swore to love each other as though indeed we were of one family, when we used to chide the swiftly flowing time for separating us? Have you forgotten those days of our childhood friendship and of youthful sunny-hearted freedom from care? Do you no longer remember the time when we shared the same seat and appeared like creators of some works of art and worked together the same design in needle-work, while our voices mingled in music, singing together as we worked, as though each part of our separate bodies were really but one single form? Thus we grew together, like to a twin cherry originating out of a single blossom; though apparently separate, yet really united. We were like two lovely berries growing on the same stem. In the same way, though we possessed separate bodies, yet in both there was only one heart working. We had two separate forms, as man and

[1] tear, rend.

[2] only a while ago

Due but to one and crowned with one crest.
And will you *rent*[1] our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'its not maidenly:
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

Her. I am amazed at your passionate words.
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

Hel. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius,
Who *even but now*[2] did spurn me with his foot,
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this

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wife have each the coat of arms proper to each, but on their marriage both are joined together beneath the crest, so were we joined together in our mutal love. Will you throw all our old love to the winds by joining with these two men who ridicule me. Such conduct is most unbefitting a maiden; all womankind would reproach you for it, though one poor girl alone endures the insult.

Her. I am surprised at your speech filled with so much passion. I do not ridicule you, though you seem to ridicule me.

Hel. Is it not at your instigation that Lysander praises me for my eyes and beautiful face, and Demetrius who only a moment ago kicked me with his foot calls me the goddess of beauty, a divine fairy, a Phoenix and a hevenly being? Why

To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your *setting on*,[1] by your consent?
What though I be not so *in grace*[2] as you,
So *hung upon*[3] with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise.

Her. I understand not what you mean by this.

Hel. Ay, do, persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon[4] me when I turn my back;
Wink each at other; *hold*[5] the sweet jest up:
This sport, well *carried*,[6] shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an *argument*.[7]

[1] incitement. [2] in favour. [3] followed [4] make faces at. [5] keep. [6] managed. [7] object (of fun).

should he address terms like those to one whom he detests? Why does Lysander deny his love for you, which fills his bosom: and tender it to me instead? It is all due to your incitement. Even though I do not find favour in the sight of others so readily as you, nor possess so many suitors: and worst of all have the misery of having given my love where it is not returned: all these things should move your compassion rather than your scorn.

Her. I do not understand what you mean by all this.

Hel. Oh yes, go on with your pretence; look in my face with a solemn countenance, and then make faces when I am not looking, and flash derisive looks at each other; keep up your fine joke. This game if well managed will be worth recording as a good story. Oh, if you had the least spark of good feeling, kindness or compassion, you would not make me the subject of your merriment. Farewell, I am partly

But fare ye well : 'tis partly my own fault :
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

Lys. Stay, gentle Helena ; hear my excuse :
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena !

Hel. O excellent !

Her. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Dem. If she cannot *entreat*,[1] I can compel.

Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat :
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.
Helen, I love thee ; by my life, I do : 251
I swear by *that*[2] which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Dem. I say I love thee more than he can do.

[1] effect by entreating

[2] *i.e.*, my-life.

to blame for it myself ; however it shall be cured by my death or by my absence.

Lys. Sweet maiden, do not go : I will explain, my beloved, my beauteous Helena.

Hel. Capital, well done.

Her. Lysander, my beloved, do not mock her thus.

Dem. If she cannot effect anything by her entreaties, I can force Lysander to desist from mocking Helena.

Lys. Your force will have no more effect upon me than her entreaties ; I disregard both alike. I am yours, I swear on my soul, Helena : I vow it by my life, which I am ready to imperil for your sake in fighting any man who declares I am not your faithful lover.

Dem. I vow that my affection is greater than his.

Lys. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

Dem. Quick, come !

Her. Lysander, whereto tends all this ?

Lys. Away, you *Ethiope*[1] !

Dem. No no ; he'll—
Seem to *break loose*[2] ; *take on as*[3] you would follow,
But yet come not : you are a *tame man*,[4] go !

Lys. Hang off, thou cat, thou *burr*[5] ! vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent ! 261

Her. Why are you grown so rude ? what change is this ?
Sweet love,—

[1]Ethiopian, *i.e.*, dark person.
[2]get away (from Hermia).
[3]pretend.
[4]coward.
[5]something that clings.

Lys. If you say so, walk aside with me and prove it in mortal combat.

Dem. Willingly, let us go at once.

Her. What does all this mean, Lysander ?

Lys. Begone, you who are dark as an Ethiopian.

Dem. Nay, my fine fellow, I will have no pretending ; you behaved in a furious manner as though you intended to follow me, but come not. Away, you are a coward.

Lys. Leave me, girl. Do not cling so that I cannot move, or I will fling you off as I would a snake.

Her. What has made you so discourteous ? Sweet Lysander, how is it ?

Lys. Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

Her. Do you not jest?

Hel. Yes, *sooth*[1]; and so do you.

Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Dem. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond[2] holds you: I'll not trust your word.

Lys. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

Her. What can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! *what news*,[3] my love!

[1] truly.

[2] a weak tie, *i.e.*, Hermia.

[3] what a strange thing.

Lys. What, I? Begone, dark-skinned one. Away: your presence is as nauseous to me as a draught of physic.

Her. Are you not joking?

Hel. Yes, indeed, and so are you too jesting.

Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with you.

Dem. I would rather have your bond than your promise; I do not believe your promises: but I see that a very frail bond is sufficient to bind you.

Lys. What should I do? Should I strike her, kill her, hurt her for putting arms round me? I would not be so inhuman as to strike her head, though I hatd her.

Her. To hate me is to do me the greatest injury possible. You hate me; that is a strange story to tell me. Do you

Am not I Hermia ? are not you Lysander ?
I am as fair now as I was *erewhile*[1].
Since night you loved me ; yet since night you left me :
Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say ?

Lys. Ay, by my life ;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, doubt ;
Be certain, nothing truer ; 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

Her. O me! you *juggler* ![2] you *canker-blossom*![3]
You thief of love ! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him ?

[1]Before this.

[2]Cheat.

[3]Destroyer of my love for Lysander.

think I am not Hermia and that you are not my Lysander. I am as beautiful now as I was only a short time ago. In one short night you have both loved me and forsaken me ; must I then think (which Heaven forbid) that you really meant to forsake me ?

Lys. Yes, by my soul ; and I do not want to see you anymore. Cease therefore to retain any hope, cease to question me on the subject, or to cheer yourself with the possibility that you are mistaken ; nothing is surer than that you are detestable to me, and that I have given all my affection to Helena.

Her. O me ! you cheat, you have destroyed the love which was blossoming between Lysander and myself just as a canker-worm destroys the blossoms of flowers ; you have stolen away his affection secretly, you robber.

Hel. Fine, i' faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you *counterfeit*,[1] you *puppet*,[2] you!
Her. Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made *compare*[3]
Between our statures; she hath *urged*[4] her height;
And with her *personage*,[5] her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so *low*[6]
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

[1] False friend. [2] Doll. [3] Comparison. [4] Laid stress on. [5] Stature. [6] Short.

Hel. This is excellent. Are you not ashamed to say such things? Have you lost all maidenly shame and modesty? What, are you determined by your abuse to compel impatient answers from one so gentle of speech as you know me to be. For shame, you pretender, you doll.

Her. Why do you call me a puppet? I see it now; it is the difference in our height which she has taken advantage of to persuade him that she is better than I; she has imposed upon him with her appearance. On account of her stately figure, she has won him over to admire her more than me. Is it because you are tall, then, that you have reached such a height in his regard? And is it because I am short that he has neglected me entirely? How short do you think me, you decorated maypole? (In this Hermia hints that Helena ows her complexion to art). I am not too short to be able to reach your eyes with my nails (to tear out the eyes).

Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me; I was never *curst*;[1]
I have no gift at all in *shrewishness*;[2]
I am a *right*[3] maid for my cowardice;
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

Her. Lower! hark, again.

Hel. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I *evermore*[4] did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your *stealth*[5] unto this wood.
He follow'd you; *for*[6] love I follow'd him;
But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too;

[1] Ill-tempered.
[2] Quarrelsomeness.
[3] True.
[4] Always
[5] Flight.
[6] Out of.

Hel. Dear sirs, although you may ridicule me, defend me from her attack; I was never spiteful, I do not possess the gift of quarrelling; I am thoroughly girlish in my cowardice. Let her not attack me. Probably you think that as she is somewhat lower (shorter) than myself, I am her equal in a quarrel.

Her. Again she says, lower. Just listen.

Hel. Good Hermia, do not be so angry with me. I always loved you, Hermia, did keep your secrets entrusted to me, and never did you any injury, except that I communicated to Demetrius that you and Lysander intended to steal away from Athens. He followed you to this wood, out of love for him I followed him, but he has rebuked me with unkindness and threats of violence; so that if you will allow me to depart,

[1]Peacefully.

[2]Silly.

And now, so you will let me *quiet*[1] go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back
And follow you no further ; let me go :
You see how *simple*[2] and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone : who is't that hinders you ?

Hel. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Her. What, with Lysander ?

Hel. With Demetrius.

Lys. Be not afraid ; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

Dem. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

I will return to the city with my foolishness, and cease to pursue you further. Let me depart now, for I have told you how foolish I am and how much in love.

Her. You can go at once ; who prevents you?

Hel. My heart is with Demetrius here, and drags me back though wishing to go.

Her. Remain with my beloved ?

Hel. No, with mine—Demetrius.

Lys. Have no fear, Helena, she shall not be allowed to do you any injury.

Dem. No, indeed; Helena shall be protected ; even though you take her part.

Hel. O, when she's angry, she is keen and *shrewd*![1]
She was a *vixen*[2] when she went to school;
And though she be but little, she is fierce.
Her. 'little' again! nothing but 'low' and 'Little'!
Why will you suffer her to *flout*[3] me thus?
Let me come to her.
Lys. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You *minimus*,[4] of *hindering knot-grass*[5] made;
You *bead*[6], you *acorn*[6].
Dem. You are too *officious*[7]
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone; speak not of Helena;
Take not her part; for, if thou dost *intend*[8]
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

[1] malicious.
[2] *Lit.* a she-fox. Bad-tempered.
[3] jeer at.
[4] small creature.
[5] a grass which was supposed to retard growth.
[6] both *bead* and *acorn* imply smallness.
[7] forward.
[8] put forward.

Hel. O, when she gets angry she is bitter-tongued. I remember that in our childhood, she was shrewish at times; and she can be very violent, notwithstanding her small size.

Her. Once more she harps on "Little", and "Low". Will you allow me to be mocked at by her in this way? Let me attack her.

Lys. Away, you midget, you tiny thing, stunted in your growth by retarding herbs; you morsel, begone.

Dem. Do not trouble yourself to offer your aid so readily to one who does not desire it; leave Helena to me; you are not required to defend her, and if you, so much as offer the least attention to her, you shall pay dearly for it.

Lys. Now she holds me not ;
Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is *most*[1] in Helena.

Dem. Follow ! nay, I' ll go with thee, *cheek by jole*[2]

[*Exeunt Lysander ond Demetrius.*

Her. You, mistress, all this *coil*[3] is *'long*[4] of you.
Nay, go not back.

Hel. I will not trust you, I,
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer though, to run away. [*Exit.*

Her. I am amazed, and know not what to say.

[*Exit.*

[1] strongest.
[2] side by side.
[3] trouble.
[4] owing to.

Lys. Now Hermia does not hold me back; now let us have a contest to see which of us has a greater right for Helena.

Dem. I will do more than follow; I will be at your side, as eager as yourself.

[*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*

Her. Now, madam, here is a fine turmoil; and it is all owing to you. No, do not go.

Hel. I do not trust you, I will no longer remain in your spiteful company. In a fight your hands would have the advantage over mine, but I am fleeter of foot than you.

[*Exit.*

Her. It is all unintelligible to me. I have no explanation.

[*Exit.*

Obe. This is thy negligence : still thou mistakest,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.
Puck. Believe me, king of *shadows*[1], I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on ?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes ;
And so far am I glad *it so did sort*[2]
As this their *jangling*[3] I esteem a sport.
Obe. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight ;
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry *welkin*[4] cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as *Acheron*,[5]
And lead these *testy*[6] rivals so astray
As one come not within another's way.

[1] spirits.
[2] turned out so.
[3] wrangling.
[4] sky.
[5] a river of the lower world.
[6] quarrelsome.

Obe. All this has been done by your carelessness; unless you did it purposely.

Puck. Nay, Fairy King, I did it in error. I was told that I should recognise the youth by his being dressed in Athenian garments ; I did place the magic juice on the eyes of an Athenian youth, so I am guiltless for my act. As for the confusion which it has caused, I enjoy it ; I am highly amused at all this wrangling.

Obe. You see that these two lovers have gone to find a convenient place for fighting, make haste, therefore, Puck, and cover the night with darkness. Hide the star-lit skies quickly with a fog as dense and dark as the river which winds through Erebus; and cause these quarrelsome lovers to lose themselves so completely that neither shall be able to find the other. To deceive them still further, imitate the voice first

Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter *wrong*;[1]
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows *death-counterfeiting*[2] sleep
With *leaden legs and batty wings*[3] doth creep:
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
Whose *liquor*[4] hath this *virtuous property*,[5]
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with *wonted sight*.[6]
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league[7] whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

[1] insult.
[2] imitating death.
[3] producing heaviness and slumber.
[4] juice.
[5] beneficient quality.
[6] usual vision.
[7] in friendship.

of one and then of the other; speak like Lysander and enrage Demetrius by insulting him; then speak like Demetrius and rebuke Lysander. In this way, lead them farther and farther away from each other, until heavy-footed, drowsy-winged slumber, so like to death, overcomes them both, and they sink down to rest. Then put the juice of this hero into Lysander's eyes which has the marvellous power of correcting all errors of vision and restore his usual vision. When they awake, all strange events will appear as empty dreams, and they will go back to Athens, united in bonds of love and friendship, which shall endure as long as they live. While you are attending to this business, I will beg Queen Titania once more for her little page; after she has consented, I will remove the spell from her eyesight so that she will no longer fall in love with the monster; and all disputes shall be happily ended.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For *night's swift dragons*[1] cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines *Aurora's harbinger*;[2]
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: *damned*[3] spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their *shames*[4] upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye *consort*[5] with black brow'd night.

[1]The swift chariots of Night, drawn by winged serpents.
[2]The morning star.
[3]cursed
[4]Shameful acts.
[5]Mix.

Puck. King of the fairies, all these things must be done quickly; that chariot of Night, drawn by its fleet dragons has almost reached its journey's end; and the morning-star which heralds the dawn, is already shining in the heavens. All the ghosts wandering here and there will hurry back in troops to their graves in the churchyard; all evil spirits are gone to their nests which are situated either in the rivers or in cross-ways. (Suicides were formerly buried in cross-ways so that their graves instead of being kept sacred as in churchyards might be trodden by every wayfarer; a stake was also driven through their hearts to mark their burial). They banish themselves from the day, so that their shameful deeds may not be revealed by day, and they must for ever join themselves to dark night.

Obe. But we are spirits of another sort:
I with the *morning's love*[1] have oft made sport,
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on *Neptune*[2] with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:
We may effect this business yet ere day. [*Exit.*

Puck. Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town:
Goblin,[3] lead them up and down.
Here comes one.

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

[1] Cephalus.

[2] The sea.

[3] A mischievous spirit.

Obe. But we fairies are of another caste. I frolic freely in the morning rays, and wander through the woods as do the rangers, even till the sun, issuing forth from the eastern gate, lights up the sea, and kindles its dark waters into shining gold. All the same do not waste any time; we may accomplish what we wish before a new day dawns.

[*Exit.*

Puck. I will lead them hither and thither; all dwellers in city or country fear my name; so, Puck, begin thy pursuit. Here comes one of them.

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. In what direction are you, proud Demetrius? Speak so that I may follow you.

Puck. Here, villain; *drawn*[1] and ready. Where art thou?

Lys. I will be with thee straight.

Puck. Follow me, then,
To *Plainer*[2] ground. [*Exit Lysander, as following the voice.*

Re-enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Lysander! speak again:
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, *recreant*;[3] come, thou child;
I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.

[1] With my sword drawn.

[2] More level

[3] Coward.

Puck. Here I am, you rascal, with my sword drawn; I am ready. Where are you?

Lys. I will come at once.

Puck. Come then to more level ground.

[*Exit Lysander, as following the voice.*

Re-enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Lysander, speak again, you coward, you have run away. Do not conceal yourself in the bushes and think of escaping me.

Puck. O, craven, are you boasting to the stars, and telling the bushes that you want to fight but never seeking your adversary, Follow me, coward; come to me, boy, and I will chastise you with a rod; a sword is degraded by being used for your punishment.

[1] Fight.

[2] Challenges.

[3] So that.

Dem. Yea, art thou there?

Puck. Follow my voice; we'll *no manhood*[1] here.

[*Exeunt.*

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. He goes before me and still *dares*[2] me on:
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly:
That[3] fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.*

Dem. Ah, are you there?

Puck. Come where my voice leads; we will not fight here.

[*Exeunt.*

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. He goes before me and challenges me to follow; but when I reach the place from where he calls, then he disappears. The rascal is much fleeter of foot than I am, for though I followed him swiftly he fled more swiftly still; so that I have lost my way and stumbled in the darkness. I will rest here. (*Lies down.*) Come quickly, gentle morning. As soon as the day dawns, I will search for Demetrius and punish him for the annoyance. [*Sleeps.*

Re-enter PUCK *and* DEMETRIUS.

Puck. Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not? 421

Dem. Abide me, if thou darest; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, *shifting every place*,[1]
And darest not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?

Puck. Come hither: I am here.

Dem. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt *buy this dear*,[2]
If ever I thy face by daylight see:
Now, go thy way. *Faintness*[3] constraineth me
To measure out my length[4] on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited. [*Lies down and sleeps.*

[1] Changing your place.

[2] Pay dearly for this.

[3] Weariness.

[4] To lie down.

Re-enter PUCK *and* DEMETRIUS.

Puck. Ha, ha, Craven, why do you not come near?

Dem. Stand where you are, and wait for me if you dare. I know well that you are trying to escape me, and dare not meet me face to face. In which direction are you at this moment?

Puck. Come in this direction, I am here.

Dem. You are only deriding me, but you shall pay dearly for it, if I find you out in daylight. Now go where you choose, I am quite faint with walking so that I am going to lie down on this cold bed. Expect me when the morning dawns, (*i.e.*, you will receive punishment at my hands in the morning).

[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Re-enter HELENA.

Hel. O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate[1] thy hours! Shine comforts from the east,
That I may back to Athens by daylight,
From these that my poor company detest:
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal[2] me awhile from mine own company.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad:
Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad.

[1] Shorten your duration.

[2] Remove.

Re-enter HELENA.

Hel. O night that passes slowly, O long and monotonous night, shorten your duration. May sunshine bring its cheering influence, so that I may be able to return to Athens and escape from those who dislike me. And may gentle sleep, which gives rest to the sorrowful heart, take me out of myself (or make me forget myself) for some time.
[*Sleeps.*

Puck. Only three yet. Let one more come; then with two of each kind, the quartette will be complete. Here is the fourth, cross and miserable. What a mischievous rascal Cupid is to play havoc with women's wits in this way.

Re-enter HERMIA.

Her. Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled[1] with the dew and torn with briars,
I can no further crawl, no further go;
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Puck. On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.
[*Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.*
When thou wakest,
Thou takest
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:

[1] Wetted thoroughly.

Re-enter HERMIA.

Her. I was never so tired and so miserable before; I am thoroughly wet with the dews and wounded by thorns. I cannot walk nor crawl further. My legs refuse to bear me, though I desire to meet Lysander. Here I will take rest till day-dawn. May God defend Lysander, if he and Demetrius really fight.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Puck. Sleep sweetly on the ground, and I will cure your eyes, gentle lover.

(*Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes*).
When you awake you will take delight in seeing your former

And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill ;[1]
Nought shall go ill ;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well. [*Exit.*

[1] Every lad will have his lass.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The same.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, *and* HERMIA, *lying asleep.*

Enter TITANIA *and* BOTTOM ; PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARDSEED, *and other Fairies attending* ; OBERON *behind, unseen.*

Tita. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy *amicable*[2] cheeks do *coy*,[3]
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

[2] lovely.
[3] caress.

beloved; and you shall exemplify the saying that each man shall possess his own; every lad shall have his lass. Each shall regain his own property, and all discord shall be ended.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Tit. Come and sit on this bank of flowers while I caress your lovely cheeks, and adorn your glossy locks with sweet-smelling roses, and bestow kisses on those beautiful big ears, my dear delight.

Bot. Where's Peaseblossom ?

Peas. Ready.

Bot. Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's Mounsieur Cobweb ?

Cob. Ready.

Bot. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle ; and, good mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not *fret*[1] yourself too much in the action, mounsieur ; and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not ; I would be loath to have you *overflown*[2] with a honey-bag, signior. Where's Mounsieur Mustardseed ?

Mus. Ready.

[1] fatigue.

[2] smothered

Bot. Where is Peaseblossom ?

Peas. At your service.

Bot. Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where is Monsieur Cobweb ?

Cob. Here.

Bot. Kind Sir, take up your weapons and kill for me one of the large red-haired bees, so that you may bring me the store of honey which he has gathered ; you will be able to find one on a thistle blossom. But be careful not to exert yourself too much, and do not allow the honey bag to be broken ; I should be very sorry to have you flooded with the honey flowing out of the honey-bag. Where is Mustardseed ?

Must. At your service, Sir.

Bot. Give me your *neaf*,[1] Mounsieur Mustard-seed. Pray you, *leave your courtesy*,[2] good mounsieur.

Mus. What's your will?

Bot. Nothing, good monsieur, but to help *Cavalery*[3] Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a *tender*[4] ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

Tita. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bot. I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the *tongs*[5] and the *bones*.[6]

Tita. Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

[1] fist.
[2] don't you be so ceremonious
[3] cavalier
[4] sensitive.
[5] an instrument struck with a key.
[6] these were rattled between the fingers.

Bot. Give me your hand, Sir: do not be ceremonious, I beg.

Must. What do you ask me to do?

Bot. Only to help the Chevalier Cobweb to scratch my head. I think I must go and get shaved, Sir; it seems to me that my face is awfully hairy; and my skin is so sensitive that the hairs irritate me very much.

Tit. My dearest one, would you like to have some music?

Bot. I appreciate music very much. Let them play on the tongs and the bones.

Tit. O my dearest one, what would you like to eat?

Bot. Truly, a peck of *provender*[1]; I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a *bottle*[2] of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no *fellow.*[3]

Tita. I have a *venturous*[4] fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee thence new nuts.

Bot. I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas.

But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an *exposition of sleep*[5] come upon me.

Tita. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and *be all ways away.*[6]
[*Exeunt fairies.*
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently *entwist*[7]; the *female*[8] ivy so

[1] dry food for beasts.
[2] bundle.
[3] equal.
[4] venturesome
[5] disposition to sleep.
[6] depart in all directions.
[7] encircle.
[8] tender.

Bot. Really I should like a peck of fodder; I could chew good dry oats with much relish; I have a great desire for a bundle of hay, sweet and fresh hay; there is nothing like it.

Tit. I have an adventurous fairy in my service who will find out the squirrel's hidden store and bring fresh nuts for you.

Bot. I should like to have some dry peas. But let no one disturb me as now I feel inclined to sleep.

Tit. Sleep, my darling, and I will entwine my arms round you. Fairies, disperse in all directions. (*Exeunt fairies.*

I will clasp him with arms as one climbing plant, the bindweed or convolvulus, intertwines itself with another, the honeysuckle; so does the ivy cling to the rough and sturdy

Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!
[*They sleep.*

Enter PUCK.

Obe. [*Advancing.*] Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?
Her *dotage*[1] now I do begin to pity:
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet *favours*[2] for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her;
For she his hairy temples then had *rounded*[3]
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and *orient*[4] pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.

[1] foolish love.
[2] love tokens.
[3] encircled.
[4] bright.

elm. O, how I love you, my be- loved. (*They sleep.*

Enter PUCK.

Obe. (*Advancing.*) I welcome you, good Robin. Don't you see this amusing sight? I am now beginning to feel sorry for her folly. A short while ago I found her in the wood gathering sweet scented flowers to be presented as nosegays to this odious fool. I reproached her and we quarrelled. She had already encircled his rough head with a crown of sweet blossoms, and the glittering dew-drops, which once used to gather and grow like round and bright pearls on the buds, now stood like shining tears within their cups, as though the fair and delicate blossoms wept with shame at the unlovely task they were called upon to perform. When I had reproached her

When I had *at my pleasure*[1] taunted her
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,
I then did ask of her changeling child;
Which *straight*[2] she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.
And now I have the boy, I will *undo*[3]
This hateful imperfection of her eyes;
And, gentle Puck, take this *transformed*[4] *scalp*
From off the head of this Athenian swain;
That, he awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair
And think no more of this night's accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

[1]to my heart's content.
[2]immediately.
[3]take off.
[4]the ass's head.

as long as I pleased, she gently begged me not to be angry with her; then I demanded her little page, and she at once gave him to me and sent one of her fairies to carry him to my fairy dwelling. Now that I have got the child, I will take off from her eyes the deception which prevents her from seeing things as they really are. Gentle Puck, remove the ass's head from the body of the peasant who has been so completely changed by means of it. They all awaking together will return to the city once more and think no more of these incidents of the night than as the fancies by which one is tortured in a dream. Before they awaken, however, I will remove the spell from my beloved Titania's eyes.

(*Touching her eyes with a herb.*

Be as thou wast wont to be ;
See as thou wast wont to see ;
Dian's bud[1] o'er *Cupid's flower*[2]
Hath such force and blessed power.
Now, my Titania ; wake you, my sweet queen.
Tita. My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.
Obe. There lies your love.
Tita. How came these things to pass ?
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now !
Obe. Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head.
Titania, music call ; and *strike more dead*[3]
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.
Tita. Music, ho ! music such as *charmeth*[4] sleep !
[*Music, still.*

[1] chaste tree.
[2] pansy.
[3] over-power.
[4] produces by enchant ment.

Return to your usual self and look upon the world as you looked before ; the flower of chaste Diana has stronger virtue than the blossom consecrated to Love. Now, awake my sweet Queen.

Tit. O my dear Oberon, what a dreadful dream I have had ! I dreamed that I was in love with an ass.

Obe. And there he sleeps.

Tit. How did these things happen ? I hate to look upon his face now.

Obe. Hush, do not waken him yet. Good Puck, take the ass's head from his shoulders ; Titania, summon your fairies to play to you, and overpower more completely than ordinary sleep would do the sense of all these five persons, the four Athenian lovers and Bottom.

Tit. Let there be music, soft music which acts as a charm in producing sleep. [*Music, still.*

Puck. Now, when thou wakest, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

Obe. Sound, music! Come, my queen, *take hands*[1] with me,
And *rock*[2] the ground whereon these sleepers be.
Now thou and I are *new in amity*[3]
And will to-morrow midnight *solemnly*[4]
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly
And bless it to all fair prosperity:
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

Puck. Fairy king, attend, and mark:
I do hear the morning lark.

[1]join hands.
[2]like a cradle.
[3]friendes once mor
[4]with pomp.

Puck. Now when you wake up, see things with your own foolish eyes.

Obe. Let the music be sounded. My fair Titania, give me your hand so that with our dance we may move the earth like a cradle to cause these sleepers to sleep more soundly. Now we two are newly made friends again and will go together to grace Duke Theseus' wedding tomorrow night, and to bestow our blessings upon his house and descendants. These different pairs of faithful lovers shall also marry then, with great delight and mirth.

Puck. Fairy King, listen. I hear the song of the lark which heralds the morn.

Obe. Then, my queen, in silence *sad*,[1]
Trip we after night's *shade*[2]:
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wandering moon.

Tita. Come, my lord, and in our flight
Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.

[*Exeunt.*

[*Horns winded within*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, *and train.*

The. Go, one of you, find out the *forester*;[3]
For now our *observation*[4] is *perform'd*[5] ;
And since we have the *vaward*[6] of the day,
My love shall heare the music of my hounds.
Uncouple[7] in the western valley ; let them go :
Dispatch,[8] I say, and find the 'forester.

[*Exit an Attendant.*

[1] grave.
[2] darkness.
[3] hunts-man.
[4] rites of the May morning.
[5] are duly observed.
[6] fore-part.
[7] let out of the slip.
[8] make haste:

Obe. Then, my Queen, let us lightly follow the darkness of the night to that part of the globe which it will be shadowing. Swiftly we can travel round this world, swifter than the moon wandering in the heavens.

Tit. Yes, my King, let us go ; and during our flight you explain to me how it happened that I was found sleeping here with all these human beings on the ground.

(*Exeunt. Horns winded within.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, *and train.*

The. Let one of you find out the huntsman, for we have duly observed all the May-day customs. and it is yet early in the day ; so I propose to follow the chase with my bride. Seek out the keeper quickly, and let him arrange to let loose the hounds in the western glen. Let us, lovely Hippolyta, climb up

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top
And mark the musical confusion.
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hip. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they *bay'd*[1] the bear
With hounds of Sparta : never did I hear
Such gallant *chiding*[2] ; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry ; I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

The. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So *flew'd*,[3] so *sanded*,[4] and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-knee'd, and *dew-lapp'd*[5] like Thessalian bulls;

[1]brought to a stand-still.
[2]noise.
[3]having hanging chaps.
[4]sand coloured.
[5]with loose skin on the neck.

to the mountain top and mark the harmonious blending of the baying of dogs and the echo of their bayings.

Hip. I was on one occasion in the company of the famous Hercules, and Cadmus of Thebes, and saw them bring a bear to bay in a Cretan forest with the help of his famous Spartan hounds. Their barking was magnificent and deep voices sounded throughout the whole region till the groves, the skies and the streams seemed all at once to re-echo the cry to each other. The rolling, crashing and yet harmonious volume of sound excelled anything, I ever heard.

The. My hounds are also of the Spartan breed. They have the same large hanging lips (or flews), and are of the same sandy colour. Their ears are so long that they almost touch the ground and brush away the morning dew ; they have strong curved legs and their flesh hangs from the throat like that of the bulls of Thessaly.

Slow in pursuit, but match'd in *mouth*[1] like bells,
Each under each[2]. A *cry*[3] more *tuneable*[4]
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly :
Judge when you hear. But, *soft*[5] ! what nymphs are these?
Ege. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep ;
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is ;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena :
I wonder *of*[6] their being here together.
The. No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and, hearing our intent,
Came here *in grace*[7] of our solemnity.
But speak, Egeus ; is not this the day
that Hermia should give answer of her choice ?

[1] voice.
[2] some higher, some lower.
[3] pack.
[4] tuneful.
[5] stop.
[6] at.
[7] in honour of.

Though slow in pursuit of games yet they are noted for the harmony of their cry like a chime of bells some higher, some lower in note (each under each). Never was a more musical pack cheered on by the huntsman's call encourged by the notes of the huntsman's horn in Crete, Sparta or Thessaly, lands famous for the chase. You shall decide when you have listened to them. But gently, gently, what fair beings have we here ?

Ege. Sir, this is Hermia, my child ; and these are the two lovers, Demetrius and Lysander ; here also is Helena, daughter of the aged Nedar. I am greatly amazed to find them all here, and in one another's company.

The. They probably came to the wood thus early in order to perform the usual May morning ceremonies, and also to be present at our marriage. But tell me, Egeus, is this not the day on which Hermia is to let me know her decision ?

Ege. It is, my lord.

The. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[*Horns and shout within. Lys., Dem., Hel., and Her., wake and start up.*

Good morrow, friends. *Saint Valentine*[1] is past:
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

Lys. Pardon, my lord.

The. I pray you all, stand up.
I know you two are rival enemies:
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

[1] the 14th of February, when birds select their mates.

Ege. It is, my lord.

The. Go and ask the huntsmen to rouse these sleepers with the sound of their horns.

(*Horns and shouts within. Lysander, Hermia,*
(*Demetrius, and Helena wake and start up.*)

The. Good morning, friends, this is long after the day sacred to St. Valentine, when the birds mate in the woods; are you only pairing at this late season?

Lys. Pardon, my lord.

The. I ask all of you to stand up. I know that you two are fierce rivals. How does such sweet harmony reign in the world that hatred is so completely free from suspicion as to sleep by the side of hatred without fearing any injury *i. e.*, how is it that you and Demetrius, who are known to hate each other so deeply, should be found sleeping close to each other, each without any fear of injury from the other?

Lys. My lord, I shall reply *amazedly*,[1]
Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here;
But, as I think,—for truly would I speak,
And now I do bethink me, so it is,—
I came with Hermia hither: our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we *might*,[2]
Without[3] the peril of th' Athenian law.

Ege. Enough, enough, my lord; you *have*[4] enough:
I beg the law, the law upon his head.
They would have stolen away; they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have *defeated*[5] you and me,
You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

[1] confusedly.
[2] marry.
[3] without incurring.
[4] have hearded.
[5] defrauded.

Lys. My answer is bound to be confused as made by one half asleep, half walking. I say on oath that I am really not certain how I came to be here. I think I came here with Hermia, for I should wish to speak the truth, and now I remember this is the truth. Our intention was to escape from Athens to some place or other beyond the reach of the Athenian law.

Eje. You need no more evidence, your grace ; enough has been admitted by Lysander to prove their guilt. I request you that he should be dealt with according to law. They desired to steal away from Athens. Thus they would have cheated you Demetrius and me ; you, of your wife and me, of my consent that Hermia should be your wife.

Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their *stealth*[1],
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena *in fancy*[2] following me
But, my good lord, I *wot*[3] not by what power,—
But by some power it is,—my love to Hermia,
Melted as melts the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle *gawd*[4]
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
And all the *faith*,[5] the *virtue*[6] of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, *come*[7] to my natural taste.
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

[1] stealing away.
[2] from love.
[3] know.
[4] toy.
[5] true love.
[6] firm loyalty.
[7] come back

Dem. My lord, fair Helena told me of their stealing away from Athens and of their intention to come to this forest. I pursued them in anger; and Helena followed me for love. But my good Lord, I do not know by what magic power it is that all my love for Hermia has melted like snow, and it appears to me now like the memory of the valueless toy which delighted me in the days of my childhood. Now all the strength and power of my affection, all its loyalty and truth is bestowed upon Helena, who is now my only joy. To her I was betrothed before I ever saw Hermia, but, just as one during illness detests the most pleasant food so did I Helena; having now regained my health and withal my natural taste, desire Helena, and swear to cherish love for her faithfully for ever.

The. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:
Of this *discourse*[1] we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will *overbear*[2] your will;
For in the temple, by and by, with us
These couples shall eternally be knit:
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens; *three and three*,[3]
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, my Hippolyta.
(Exeunt The. Hip., Ege., and train.

Dem. These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

Her. Methinks I see these things *with parted eye*,[4]
When every thing seems double.

[1] narrative.
[2] over-rule
[3] three-couples.
[4] with the two eyes not focused on the same point.

The. This is a most happy meeting for all of you; I should like to hear more of your story later. And I shall over-rule your desires in this matter, Egeus; I decree that both these pairs of lovers shall accompany us to the sacred temple and there be joined together in marriage for ever. Now, as the morning has greatly advanced, we will abandon our intended hunt and return to the city. The marriage-feasts of three brides and three bridegrooms shall be solemnised together. Come, my beloved.

(*Exeunt Theseus Hippolyta, Egeus and train.*)

Dem.—Already our recent experiences, the events of the night, at the time so vivid and real, seem far away and shadowy and unreal like mountain-tops on the distant horizon changed into dim, unsubstantial clouds.

Her. I think, I see things as one would if one's eyes were not in focus with each other. Everything seems double to me.

Hel. So methinks:
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.
Dem. Are you sure
That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The duke was here, and bid us follow him?
Her. Yea, and my father.
Hel. And Hippolyta.
Lys. And he did bid us follow to the temple.
Dem. Why, then, we are awake: let's follow him;
And by the way let us recount our dreams.
[*Exeunt.*

Hel. So it appears to me. I seem to have found my lover as one finds a precious stone which is not really his, and yet which belongs to him by virtue of his having found it.

Dem. It seems to me that we are still sleeping and moving in a world of dreams. It is really true that Duke Theseus was in this wood and commanded us to come to Athens after him.

Her. Yes, he was here and so was my father.

Hel. Hippolyta too was here.

Lys. And the duke commanded us to follow him to the temple.

Dem. Well, then we are awake. Let us follow the duke to the temple and in the way we shall tell each other about the visions we have had this night.

(*Exeunt.*

[1] next cue.

[2] beyond the wisdom

[3] a jester in party coloured suit.

Bot. [*Awaking*] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer : my *next*[1] is, 'Most fair Pyramus.' Heigh-ho ! Peter Quince ! Flute, the bellows-mender ! Snout, the tinker! Starveling ! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep ! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, *past the wit*[2] of man to say what dream it was : man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was —there is no man tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a *patched fool*,[3] if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart tc report, what my dream was. I I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream : it shall be called Bottom's Dream,

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Bot. (*Waking.*) Let me know when it is my turn to go on the stage ; the next words which give me the signal are "Most fair Pyramus". Ah, Peter Quince, Flute, Good masters, all. Where are you ? Heaven, they have run slily off, and gone while I was sleeping. What a wonderful dream I have had. It was a dream, which would defy any man's power to put into words ; indeed he would be a fool to try. "I seemed to have—I seemed to be," but he would be a fool indeed, if a man tried to say what it was. No man's senses have ever experienced, nor his imagination pictured, such a wonderful dream as I dreamt to-night. I shall ask Peter Quince to make a poem about my dream, and I shall call it after myself, because the title will suit it. I shall sing it

because it hath no bottom ; and I will sing it in the latter end of our play, before the duke : peradventure, to make it the more *gracious*[1] I shall sing it at *her*[2] death.

[*Exit.*

[1] beautiful
[2] Thisbe's

SCENE II. *Athens.* QUINCE'S *house.*

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house ? is he come home yet ?

Star. He cannot be heard of. *Out of doubt*[3] he is *transported*[4].

Flu. If he come not, then the play is marred : *it goes not forward*,[5] doth it ?

Quin. It is not possible : you have not a man in all Athens able to *discharge*[6] Pyramus but he.

[3] without doubt.
[4] carried off by the fairies.
[5] it cannot come off.
[6] perform.

---

in the Duke's presence at the conclusion of the play, perhaps it will sound most pleasing after Thisbe's death.

(*Exit*

SCENE II. *Athens.* QUINCE'S *house.*

Quin. Has any one been to Bottom's house to see if he has returned ?

Star. No one knows anything about him. He must certainly have been carried off or removed by the same supernatural agency.

Flute. If he does not return, our play will be entirely spoiled. We cannot go on with the play without him.

Quin. It is impossible to go on with the play. There is not a single man in Athens who will be able to play the part of Pyramus properly except him.

Flu. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraftman in Athens.

Quin. Yea, and the best person too ; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flu. You must say 'paragon' : a paramour is, God bless us, *a thing of naught.*[1]

Enter SNUG.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married : if our sport had gone forward, *we had all been made men.*[2]

Flu. O sweet bully Bottom ! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life ; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day : and the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged ; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day *in*[3] Pyramus, or nothing.

[1] a worthless thing.

[2] our fortunes would have been made.

[7] in the part of.

Flu. That is true ; he is the cleverest of all the working men in the city.

Quin. Yes, and he is handsomest also and he has a paramour voice.

Flu. You must say '*Parajon*' which means "a model of excellence." Paramour is a worthless, naughty thing.

Enter SNUG.

Snuj. Friends, the duke is coming from the temple after his marriage and there are two or three lords and ladies more married. If our play had been acted, our fortune would have been made.

Flu My fine friend Bottom has lost his chance of a pension for life. He would certainly have got sixpence a day from the Duke, I swear ; nothing less, I am sure, would have been a just reward for acting so fine a part.

Enter BOTTOM.

Bot. Where are these lads? where are these *hearts*?[1]

Quin. Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

Bot. Masters, *I am to discourse wonders*:[2] but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom. 29

Bot. Not a word *of*[3] me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good *strings*[4] to your beards, new ribbons to your *pumps*;[5] meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is *preferred*.[6]

[1] good fellows.

[2] I have wonders to relate.

[3] from.

[4] for tying on the beards.

[5] shoes.

[6] offered.

Enter BOTTOM.

Bot. Now, my boys, my dear fellows, where are you all?

Quin. Here you are Bottom. What a happy day! What an auspicious hour!

Bot. Friends, I have to tell you wonderful things but I do not know what they really are. Do not ask me to say, for I cannot do it. I will tell you everything, exactly as it happened.

Quin, Let us hear, my fine fellow.

Bot. You will get nothing out of me. I will only say that Duke Theseus' hour for dining has passed, and it is time to prepare for the play. Have all your garments ready, keep strong strings to your false beards so that they may not fall off in the acting; new ribbons to your shoes. Let us meet immediately at the palace; each of us must look over his lines again, for the fact is that our play has been offered for accep-

In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet *breath*[1]; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go, away! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. *Athens. The palace of* THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords, *and* Attendants.

Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus *that*[2] these lovers speak of.

The. More strange than true: I never *may*[3] believe
These *antique*[4] fables, nor these *fairy toys*[5].

[1] language.
[2] what.
[3] can.
[4] old and odd.
[5] absurd fairy tales.

---

tance. Be careful that the man who takes Thisbe's part puts on clean garments; and the one who is to be the lion had better leave his nails long, that they may look more like claws. And also take care not to eat any strong-smelling food, for we are to utter sweet language with a sweet breath, so that people may cry that it is a sweet (happy) Comedy. Say no more. Go quickly. (*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. *Athens. The palace of* THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, LORDS *and* Attendants.

Hip. These events which the lovers have narrated to us seem most unusual and astonishing.

The. Yes, they are more astonishing than true things. I can never believe these fanciful tales and absurd fables. It

Lovers and madmen have such *seething*[1] brains,
Such *shaping fantasies*,[2] that *apprehend*[3]
More than cool reason ever *comprehends*.[4]
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination *all compact*:[5]
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman : the lover, all as frantic,
Sees *Helen's beauty*[6] in *a brow of Egypt*:[7]
The poet's eye, in *a fine frenzy*[8] rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;
And as imagination *bodies forth*[9]
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to *airy nothing*[10]
A local habitation and a name.

[1] boiling.
[2] imaginations that create forms.
[3] grasp.
[4] fully understands.
[5] entirely made up.
[6] perfect beauty.
[7] the face of a gyspy.
[8] ecstasty of inspiration.
[9] presents as concrete.
[10] imaginary things.

is only lovers and madmen whose brains so bubble over with imagination, and are so quick in calling up fantastic images, so ready to conceive far greater wonder than ordinary reasonable human beings can grasp. There are three classes of people who are entirely composed of imagination—mad men, poets and lovers. The lunatic's imagination presents to his view more devils than the vast hell can hold; the lover, wholly mad, finds a dark-faced gipsy as beautiful as Helen of Troy; the poet's eye rolling in the splendid exaltation of inspiration, glances from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven. (sees the whole world around). And as our imagination calls up images of objects that exist neither in heaven nor on earth, so his poems embody for us the conceptions of his quick and delicate fancy, giving form and substance to those elusive, unsubstantial images which are the creations of his romantic brain.

Such *tricks*[1] hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but *apprehend*[2] some joy,
It *comprehends*[3] some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some *fear*,[4]
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

Hip. But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds *transfigured*[5] so together,
More *witnesseth*[6] than fancy's images
And grows to something of great *constancy*,[7]
But, however, strange and *admirable*[8].

The. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

[1]feats of conjuring. [2]conceive. [3]conceit. [4]object of fear. [5]transfor. [6]showeth. [7]consistency. [8]marvellous.

A powerful imagination possesses such peculiar art that the mere idea of a joy is enough incentive to it to conjure up and believe in the actual presence of something which causes that joy' or in the darkness of the night, if one imagines some object of fear, then how easily even a bush is taken for a bear, *i.e.*, how an innocent thing is taken for the most fearful thing.

Hip. If we put the whole account together and notice how their stories agree and think of the strange transformations all their thoughts and ideas seem to have undergone, it gives proof of something more than fanciful imagination and has the appearance of real consistency; but whether it be fact or fancy, it is none the less unusual and wonderful.

The. See, the lovers are approaching, joyous and happy.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, *and* HELENA.

Joy, gentle friends ! joy and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts !
Lys. More than to us
Wait in[1] your royal walks, your board, your bed !
The. Come now ; what masques, what dances shall we have,
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our *after-supper*[2] and bed-time ?
Where is our usual *manager of mirth*[3] ?
What revels are in hand ? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour ?
Call Philostrate.
Phil. Here, mighty Theseus.

[1] attend on.

[1] dessert.

[3] the master of revels.

Enter LYSANDER, HERMIA, DEMETRIUS *and* HELENA.

Joy be to you, gentle friends; may your happiness increase from day to day.

Lys. And may joy and happiness in still greater degree be with your Highness, and be with you ever and everywhere.

The. Now let us consider with what plays and dances we can spend the time of three long hours which we are to pass after our last meal until we retire. Where is the master of our revels? Has he arranged some show which will make the time pass quickly. Bring Philostrate hither.

Phil. I am here, great King.

The. Say, what *abridgement*[1] have you for this evening ?
What masque ? what music ? How shall we beguile
The *lazy*[2] time, if not with some delight ?

Phil. There is a *brief*[3] how many sports are *ripe*.[4]
Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[*Giving a paper.*

The. [*Reads*] 'The battle with the *Centaurs*,[5] to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.
We'll none of that : that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
[*Reads*] 'The riot of the tipsy *Bacchanals*,[6],
Tearing the *Thracian singer*[7] in their rage.

[1] means of shortening or amusement.
[2] passing slowly.
[3] list.
[4] ready.
[5] the bull-killer.
[6] Thracian woman infuriated by drink.
[7] orphans.

The. What shows, what sports or music can you give us to make the evening hours pass quickly ? We must have some pleasant pastime to while away the slow-moving time.

Phil. Here is a short statement describing the sports that are ready. Your Highness make any choice of these.

(*Giving a paper.*

The. (*Reads*) "The battle with Centaurs to be sung by an Athenian Officer with the music of the harp as an accompaniment." That need not be performed ; I have already related that story to my bride in telling her of the exploits of my renowned kinsman Hercules.

(*Reads*) "The story of the death of Orpheus, who was killed by the wild devotees of Bacchus in their frenzy." That

That is an old device: and it was play'd
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.
[*Reads*] 'The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.'
That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not *sorting*[1] with a nuptial ceremony.
[*Reads*] 'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.'
Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!
That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we *find the concord of this discord*?[2]

Phil. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,

[1] agreeing.

[2] reconcile these opposites.

is an old play, it was played when I returned from Thebes victorious.

(*Reads*) "The Nine Goddesses of Arts, Poetry and Science, lamenting the misfortunes of learning recently starved to death". That is some keen and severe satire on the decay of learning, not suiting a marriage ceremony.

(*Reads*) "A wearisome little play about a youth and his ladylove; a mournful piece of merriment." Mirthful and mournful. Wearisome and short. That is, hot ice, and wonderfully strange snow. How can things so completely opposed to each other go harmoniously together?

Phil. There, Sir, you have a little drama, of a very few words indeed; it is as short a piece as I have ever heard;

Which makes it tedious ; for in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player *fitted*[1] :
And tragical, my noble lord, it is ;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water ; but more merry tears
The *passion*[2] of loud laughter never shed.

The. What are they that do play it ?

Phil. Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labour'd in their minds till now,
And now have *toil'd*[3] their *unbreathed*[4] memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

The. And we will hear it.

[1] suited, his part.
[2] emotion.
[3] exercised.
[4] untrained.

there are ten lines in it more which make it wearisome ; from beginning to end the words and actors are quite unsuitable. It is tragical for in it the hero kills himself. When I saw this play rehearsed, tears came into my eyes. I shed tears, certainly, but they were from excessive laughter, not sorrow.

The. Who are the actors ?

Phil. They are the working men of the city, who have never before put in hard mental work but now have exerted their hitherto unexercised memories in studying this play in preparation for your wedding festivities.

The. And we will hear it.

Phil. No, my noble lord ;
It is not *for*[1] you : I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world ;
Unless you can find sport in their *intents*,[2]
Extremely *stretch'd*[3] and *conn'd*[4] with cruel pain,
To do your service.
The. I will hear that play ;
For never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in : and take your places, ladies.
[*Exit Philostrate.*
Hip. I love not to see *wretchedness*[5] *o'ercharged*[6]
And duty in his service perishing.

[1]fit for.
[2]attemps.
[3]strained.
[4]learned.
[5]poor capacity.
[6]attempting more than can perform.

Phil. No, my noble lord, it is not meant for you. I have heard the play from beginning to end, it provides no entertainment. The only thing to recommend it is the actors' strenuous endeavour to learn, and to perform it, in order to please your grace.

The. I will see that play acted. No action is ever deserving of contempt when it is offered with a single-hearted, loyal desire to please. Let the ladies and actors be called in.

(*Exit Philostrate.*

Hip. "It is no pleasant sight to me to see poor wretches labouring under a task too heavy for them, and those who from a feeling of duty offer their services failing in their, attempt to acquit themselves well. (Hippolyta is unwilling that the poor rustics should be allowed to play before her and break down in the attempt.)"

The. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

Hip. He says they can do nothing *in this kind.*[1]

The. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to *take what they mistake*.[2]
And what poor duty cannot do, noble *respect*[3]
Takes it in *might*[4], not *merit*[5].
Where I have come, great *clerks*[6] have purposed
To greet me with *premeditated*[7] welcomes ;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make *periods*[8] in the midst of sentences,
Throttle[9] their *practised accent*[10] in their fears
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not playing me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,

[1] *i.e.* in-acting.
[2] accept their short-comings.
[3] courtesy.
[4] intention.
[5] merits of the performance.
[6] scholars.
[7] carefully prepared.
[8] fullstops.
[9] mumble in their throats.
[10] skilled eloquotion.

The. You will not be pained by such a spectacle, my beloved.

Hip. But did not Philostrate tell us that they were quite unable to perform anything properly?

The. That will make our kindness the greater as we give thanks for what does not in itself deserve them. We shall take their blundering representation in good part. We must find our pleasure in looking upon what they mean, rather than upon what they imperfectly do. And in case where people anxious to do their duty, fail in their efforts, a generous mind gives credit for the ability of the doer, not for the quality of the thing done. I have seen even great scholars, who have come before me with the intention of greeting me with well-studied speeches, tremble from head to foot with their pale faces, and come to a full stop in the middle of a sentence, in a fit of nervous excitement choke the eloquence which they have spent so much pains in preparing, and break off in the middle of their address without giving me the welcome they had intended. Trust me, Hippolyta, I have interpreted this very

Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome ;
And in the modesty of *fearful*[1] duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least[2] speak most, *to my capacity.*[3]

Re-enter PHILOSTRATE.

Phil. So please your grace, the Prologue is *address'd.*[4]

The. Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*

Enter QUINCE *for the* Prologue.

Pro. If we offend, it is with our good will.
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.

[1] timid
[2] when they say.
[3] as far as I am capable of judging.
[4] ready.

silence of theirs as an eloquent welcome ; I have recognised as much sincerety in their humble and timid loyalty as in the most fluent speech ever rattled off by a forward and self-confident speaker. In my opinion, love and single-hearted sincerity are often speechless, and mean most when least is said.

Re-enter PHILOSTRATE.

Phil. The first actor is ready to recite the opening speech, your Highness.

The. Let him begin.

[*Flourish of Trumpets.*

Enter QUINCE *for the Prologue.*

Prof. If you should not be pleased with our efforts, we greatly desire that you should understand that we have no intention whatever of displeasing you. But it is our real desire to display our modest powers. That is then our real object.

Consider then we come but *in despite*.[1]
We do not come as *minding*[2] to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight
We are not here. That you should here repent
you,
The actors are at hand and by their show
You shall know all that you are *like*[3] to know

The. This fellow doth not *stand upon points*[4]

Lys. He hath *rid*[5] his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the *stop*[6]. A good moral, my lord : it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

Hip. Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a *recorder*;[7] a sound, but not in *government*.[8]

[1] in defiance.
[2] intending.
[3] likely.
[4] mind the stop. or stand upon ceremony.
[5] got through.
[6] check.
[7] a small flageolet with a mouth-piece.
[8] under control.

See then we are here but not to annoy you; our real aim is to give you entire satisfaction. We have not come in order that you should regret spending your time upon us. The players are now ready to appear; you will gain all the information necessary from the drama itself, which they now present.

The. This fellow is not particular about stops.

Lys. His prologue goes like an unbroken colt that pays no heed to the curb of its rider. He does not pay attention to the stops. That conveys a lesson, your grace, if we consider it, one needs not merely to speak, but to speak correctly.

Hip. His speech reminded one of a child trying to play an instrument of music; producing a sound, it is true, but one which is not under control.

The. His speech was like a tangled chain; *nothing impaired*,[1] but all disordered. Who is next?

Enter PYRAMUS *and* THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, *and* LION.

Pro. *Gentles*,[2] perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast doth present
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

[1] in no way injured.

[2] gentlemen

The. Yes, it was like a chain which has become intertwined, though not broken; it was all there, but terribly mixed.

Enter PYRAMUS, THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE *and* LION.

Prof. Noble lords and ladies, you are surprised at this show but the events will soon explain all to you. This actor is the hero, Pyramus; and truly this lovely maiden is Thisbe. This man, whose dress shows mortar and gravel, represents the hateful wall which separated these lovers; and through the chink in the wall, poor lovers are contented to whisper words of love into each other's ears. Let no one be surprised at this. This man with a lantern, dog and a thorny bush, repre-

This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers *think no scorn*[1]
To meet at *Ninus*[2] tomb, there, there to woo,
This grisly beast, which Lion *hight*[3] by name,
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;
And, as she fled, her mantle she did *fall*[4],
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain;
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely *broach'd*[5] his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,

[1]did not disdain.
[2]the founder of Nineveh.
[3]was called
[4]drop.
[5]tapped.

sents Moonshine; for, if you desire to hear the story, these lovers were not ashamed to meet each other at Ninus's Tomb, and there carry on their courtship. This grim and fierce-looking animal, which is called Lion greatly terrified the faithful lady, who arrived first at the meetfng-place. And she fled, she dropped her cloak which the vile beast covered with stains of blood. Presumably the fine handsome lover comes near and finds his faithful Thisbe's cloak lying stained on the ground. Thereupon he draws his sword, and with guilty weapon he courageously pierces his bursting heart; and Thisbe, who was hiding herself, for fear of the lion, in the shelter of the mulberry trees, coming out drew the dagger from his wound and

His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain.
At large[1] discourse, while here they do remain.

[*Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe, Lion, and Moonshine.*

The. I wonder if the lion be to speak.

Dem. *No wonder*,[2] my lord : one lion may, when many asses do.

Wall. In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall ;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall ; the truth is so :

[1] at length

[2] you need not wonder

killed herself with it. Now let all the players proceed with their speeches, and you will hear all the story.

(*Exeunt Prologue, Thisbe, Lion and Moonshine*).

The. I wonder, if the lion has to speak.

Dem. It would be nothing wonderful if he had to speak, considering how many asses have plenty to say.

Wall. It happens, in this play, that I am supposed to be a wall, though I am really Snout. It is such a wall, you should imagine, as posseses a chink in it, through which the two lovers Pyramus and Thisbe, occasionally whispered to each other secretly. The mortar and stones shown on my dress tell you that I represent the wall. This the chink, from

[1]going right and left.
[2]used with lime to give it consistency.
[3]gloomy.

And this the cranny is, *right and sinister*,[1]
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

The. Would you desire rime and *hair*[2] to speak better?

Dem. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

Re-enter PYRAMUS.

The. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

Pyr. O *grim-look'd*[3] night! O night with hue so black!
O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night, O night! alack, alack, alack,
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine!

---

right to left, through which the fearful lovers do often whisper.

The. Could you wish for a better discourse from stone and mortar?

Dem. It is the cleverest Wall I ever heard making a speech, your highness.

Enter PYRAMUS.

The. Hush! the lover approaches the Wall.

Pyr. O gloomy night! O the deepest darkness which always comes when day has fled! Alas! I dread to find that my Thisbe does not remember her promise. Now kind,

Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to *blink*[1] through with mine eyne!

[*Wall holds up his fingers.*]

Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!
But what see I? No Thisby do I see.
O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!
Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

The. The wall, methinks, being *sensible*[2] should curse again.

Pyr. No, in truth, sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me' is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall *pat*[3] as I told you. Yonder she comes.

[1] peep.

[2] possessing feelings.

[3] exactly.

gentle wall, which divides me from her father's ground let me peep through the chink, and look for her

[*Wall holds up his fingers.*]

Kind wall, I thank you. Heaven's blessings on you for this goodness. But I do not find my Thisby, O wicked wall. Let curses fall on your stones for thus deceiving me.

The. I think that the wall possessing sense or feeling will curse in turn.

Pyr. No, my lord, really he must not do that. The last words I spoke gave Thisbe the signal to come on; she will enter now and I will see her through the chink. If you will notice, Sir, all will happen just as I have said. There comes Thisbe.

Re-enter THISBE.

This. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!
My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.
Pyr. I see a voice: now will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.
Thisby!
This. My love thou art, my love I think.
Pyr. Think what thou wilt, I am thy *lover's grace*;[1]
And, like *Limander*,[2] am I trusty still.
This. And I like *Helen*,[3] till the Fates me kill.
Pyr. Not *Shafalus*[4] to *Procrus*[5] was so true.

[1] graceful lover.
[2] Leander.
[3] Hero.
[4] Cephalus, loved by Aurora.
[5] Procris, Cephalus's wife.

Enter THISBE.

Thi. O wall, many times, you have heard my lamentations because you divide me from my love. My rosy lips have often kissed your stones, securely held by the mortar.

Pyr. I hear a sound, I must go to the chink to see whether I can see my love's countenance and hear her voice, Thisbe!

This. I believe that is my Pyramus.

Pyr. No matter what you believe, it is your graceful lover who is faithful Leander to his love.

This. And I faithful as Hero till I die.

Pyr. I am more constant than Cephalus was ever to his wife Procris.

This. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

Pyr. O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!

This. I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

Pyr. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

This. '*Tide life,' tide death,*[1] I come without delay.

[*Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.*

Wall. Thus have I, Wall, my part *discharged*[2] so;
And being done, thus Wall away doth go. [*Exit.*

The. Now is the *mural*[3] down between the two neighbours.

[1] whether life or death befall.

[2] performed.

[3] wall.

This. I am as true to you as Cephalus was to his wife.

Pyr. O kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.

This. I cannot kiss your lips, only stones I kiss.

Pyr. Will you come to Ninus' grave now, and meet me there?

This. Whatever befall me, I will come at once.

[*Exeunt* WALL, PYRAMUS *and* THISBE.]

Wall. Thus I have performed my part, and having performed it, now I go.

The. Thus away goes the wall between the two lovers.

[1] help.
[2] ready.
[3] the best plays are but shadows of real life.
[4] improve.

Dem. No *remedy*[1], my lord, when walls are so *wilful*[2] to hear without warning.

Hip. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

The. *The best in this kind are but shadows*[3], and the worst are no worse, if imagination *amend*[4] them.

Hip. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

The. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in a man and a lion. 212

Dem. Walls should be pulled down, if they show their readiness to overhear secretly what is said between two neighbours.

Hip. I have never listened to such nonsense in my life.

The. The best plays are but poor representations of life; the worst of them can do a lot, only they demand more imagination to help them out.

Hip. The imagination must be supplied by the audience then.

The. If the audience think no less of the actors than they think of themselves they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble animals—a man and a lion.

Re-enter LION *and* MOONSHINE.

Lion. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest *monstrous*[1] mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
A lion *fell*[2], nor else *no lion's dam*[3];
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

The. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

Dem. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

Lys. This lion is *a very fox for his valour*[4].

[1] horrible.
[2] cruel.
[3] lioness.
[4] not valiant at all.

Enter LION *and* MOONSHINE.

Lion. You, gentle ladies, who are terrified to see the smallest terrible mouse creeping on the floor, may now shake with fear when you hear a fierce lion roar, therefore I tell you that this grim and cruel beast is only myself, Snug the joiner, neither a cruel lion, nor a lioness. It would be a matter of deep regret if I were to appear in this play as a fierce lion, ready to kill.

The. He is a very harmless and honest beast.

Dem. I have never seen a better beast in my life.

Lys. This lion is as valorous as a fox, *i. e.*, not at all.

[1]he betrays himself.

[2]carries off.

[3]crescent.

The. True; and *a goose for his discretion*[1].

Dem. Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his discretion; and the fox *carries*[2] the goose.

The. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well: leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon.

Moon. This lanthorn doth the *horned*[3] moon present:—

Dem. He should have worn the horns on his head.

The. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

The. Right you are; and he is as wise as the goose, *i. e.*, not at all.

Dem. Scarcely, Sir; the fox can carry off the goose, but this lion has not courage enough to carry off any thing. His valour cannot run away with his discretion as the fox runs away with the goose.

The. "If his discretion, as you say is too much for his valour (*i. e.*, if his discretion prevents him from exhibiting his valour), I am sure on the other hand that his valour is too much for his discretion (*i. e.*, will not allow his discretion to show itself) for, as we all know, it is not the goose that carries the fox." Well, let us leave him to his devices, and let us in the meantime listen to the moon.

Moon. This light that I bear represents the crescent moon.

Dem. Then there should have been horns on his forehead.

The. He is not the waxing moon; he is the full moon and his horns are hidden in the whole circle of light.

Moon. This lanthorn doth the horned moon present;
Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.

The. This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man i' the moon?

Dem. He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already *in snuff*[1].

[1] angry.

Hip. I am aweary of this moon: would he would change!

The. It appears, by his small *light of discretion*[2], that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

[2] amount of sense.

Lys. Proceed, Moon.

Moon. This lanthorn that I bear represents the crescent moon; and I represent the man in the moon.

The. This is the worst mistake that has yet been made. How can he be the man in the moon unless he is put inside the lantern?

Dem. He is afraid to go inside on account of the burning candle; the burnt-out wick is long enough to injure any one.

Hip. I am tired of this moon; I wish he had changed.

The. Judging by the littleness of his light (of wisdom) it appears that it is already on the wane, *i.e.*, he will soon leave the stage; but we must, for kindness' sake stay on till the play is finished.

Lys. Go ahead and tell your story, Moon.

Moon. All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon ; I, the man in the moon ; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush ; and this dog, my dog.

Dem. Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for all these are in the moon. But, silence ! here comes Thisbe.

Re-enter THISBE.

This. This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love ?

Lion. [*Roaring*] Oh— *Thisbe runs off.*

Dem. Well roared, Lion.

The. Well run, Thisbe.

Hip. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace. [*The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.*

Moon. All that I have to say is that the lantern is the moon ; I represent the man in the moon ; this thorn bush is my thorn-bush ; and this dog is my dog.

Dem. Then all these should be inside the lantern. Hush, Thisbe is coming now.

Enter THISBE.

This. Here is the tomb of Ninus but where is Pyramus?

Lion. (*Roaring*) Oh :—

(*Thisbe runs off.*

Dem. An excellent roar, Lion.

The. A capital run, Thisbe.

Hip. A good performance, Moon. Truly, the moon shines most beautifully.

(*The Lion tears Thisbe's mantle and exit.*

The. Well *moused*,[1] Lion.
Lys. And so the lion vanished.
Dem. And then came Pyramus.

Re-enter PYRAMUS.

Pyr. Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering *gleams*,[2]
I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.
But stay, *O spite*[3]!
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful *dole*[4] is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!
Thy mantle *good*[5]
What, stain'd with blood!

[1] to tear as a cat tears a rat.
[2] beams.
[3] misfortune.
[4] grief.
[5] fine.

The. You have torn well, Lion.

Dem. And immediately the lover has appeared.

Lys. Thus the lion has disappeared.

Enter PYRAMUS.

Pyr. Many thanks, kind moon, for your bright rays. I am grateful to you for your brilliant light with the kindly help of which I hope to have sight of my faithful love, Thisbe. *But* wait a moment: woe is me! Alas, unhappy lover, what horrible grief is here in store for me! Am I to trust the evidence of my eyes? Oh, my sweet love, oh, my darling, it is your

Approach, ye Furies fell !
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and *thrum*[1]
Quail,[2] crush, conclude, and *quell*![3]

The. This *passion*[4] and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hip. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyr. O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
Since lion vile hath here *deflower'd*[5] my dear:
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame.
That lived, that loved, that liked, that look'd *with cheer*[6].

[1] the knotted end of a thread in the weaver's wrap.
[2] crush.
[3] kill.
[4] strong emotion.
[5] cut off in her youth.
[6] cheerfully

cloak, all soiled with blood. Come, ye cruel Furies and Destinies who weave the web of man's life; come and cut now all the threads of my life, destroy everything, good and bad, kill me!

The. This violent emotion together with the death of a dear friend, would very nearly make one look sorrowful.

Hip. Curse me if I do not pity the fellow.

Pyr. Oh! why were lions created by Nature? One roguish lion has cruelly cut off my sweet love, the loveliest flower in all the world in the prime. But alas: I must not say that she is but must say that she was the loveliest lady that ever lived, loved, liked and looked bright and cheerful. O

Come, tears, *confound*[1]
Out, sword, and wound
The *pap*[2] of Pyramus;
Ay, that left pap,
Where heart doth *hop*[3].
[*Stabs himself.*
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
Now am I dead,
Now am I fled;
My soul is in the sky:
Tongue, lose thy light;
Moon, take thy flight:
[*Exit Moonshine.*
Now die, die, die, die, die. [*Dies*

Dem. No die, but an *ace*,[4] for him; for he is but one.

Lys. Less than ace, man; for he is dead; he is nothing.

[1] destroy.

[2] breast.

[3] beat.

[4] the lowest point on a die.

---

tears, come into my eyes and be my undoing. O sword, wound the breast of Pyramus, the left one where his faithful heart beats. (*Stabs himself*). Thus I die. Now my life is ended. My spirit has fled to the heavens above.

I can no longer speak, no longer see the moonlight. (*Exit Moonshine*). Now I die.

Dem. He cannot call himself a die, but only an ace, a single spot on a die, for, he is only one person.

Lys. He is not even that, for he is dead; he is mere nothingness.

The. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hip. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

The. She will find him by starlight. Here she comes; and her *passion*[1] ends the play.

[1] passionate lament.

Re-enter THISBE.

Hip. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

Dem. A *mote*[2] will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

[2] the smallest atom.

Lys. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

The. With the help of a doctor, he might yet recover and thus prove himself an ass (ace).

Hip. How is it that Moonshine leaves the stage before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover.

The. She will find him by starlight. Here she is, and her passionate lament brings the play to an end.

Re-enter THISBE.

Hip. I think she should not be too long at it; I should think a very short lamentation would do for such a lover.

Dem. There is little difference between them as actors so that the smallest particle would turn the scale and decide whether Pyramus as a man or Thisbe as a woman is the better actor of the two. Heaven preserve us, they are such precious specimens of their sexes.

Lys. She has already seen him with her beautiful eyes.

Dem. And thus she *means*[1], *videlicet*[2] :—

This. Asleep, my love ?
What, dead, my dove ?
O Pyramus, arise
Speak, speak. Quite dumb ?
Dead, dead ? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone :
Lovers, make moan :
His eyes were green as *leeks*[3].
O *Sisters Three*[4]
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have *shore*[5]
With shears his thread of silk.

[1]moans.
[2]namely.
[3]onions.
[4]the fates.
[7]shorn.

Dem. And thus she expresses herself, you may see.

This. Beloved one, are you sleeping or dead? O Pyramus, awake and speak to me! He does not reply, he is dead. His bright eyes must be hidden in a grave; his white lips, his red nose, his yellow cheeks are gone for ever. Let all the lovers of the world weep for me! Oh, his lovely eyes were green as onions! O cruel Fates, you three sisters Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, come now and end my life; let your death-white hands be dyed red with my blood, since you have cut with your shears the fine thread of my lover's life. I can

[1]drench in blood.

Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword:
Come, blade, my breast *imbrue*:[1]
[Stabs herself.
And, farewell, friends;
Thus Thisby ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu. *[Dies.*

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Dem. Ay, and Wall too.

Bot. [*Starting up*] No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a *Bergomask*[2] dance between two of our company?

[2]burliest dance.

The. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the

---

speak no more; now I bury this good blade in my bosom and shed my heart's blood. (*Stabs herself.*) Farewell, my friends; thus dies Thisbe; farewell, farewell. (*Dies*).

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Dem. Yes, and Wall too.

Bot. (*Starting up*) No, I assure you that the wall which separated their fathers is gone and therefore cannot assist in burying the dead. Would your highness like to hear the epilogue, or to see a couple of our members perform an Italian rustic dance?

The. We do not want any epilogue; your performance needs no explanation or apology. You need not make an

players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that *writ*[1] it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly; and very *notably*[2] discharged. But, come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.*

The iron tongue of midnight hath *told*[3] twelve:
Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.
I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn
As much as we this night have *overwatch'd*.[4]
This *palpable-gross*[5] play hath well beguiled
The heavy *gait*[6] of night. Sweet friends, to bed.
A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
In nightly revels and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*

[1] wrote.
[2] creditably.
[3] struck.
[4] kept too long awake
[5] whose dullness is so visible.
[6] passing.

apology for when the players are all dead none can come in for criticism. Upon my word, if the author had taken Pyramus's part himself, and committed suicide, it would have been a fine tragedy: however, it is very fine and has been admirably acted. Now let us have the dance: none of your epilogue. [*A dance.*

The clock has struck twelve: let the lovers go to bed; it is the witching hour of midnight when fairies are abroad. I am afraid we shall sleep till well after the coming dawn by as much time as we have kept awake beyond night-fall. This obviously dull performance has well beguiled the slow-moving hours of the night. Sweet friends, go to bed. For two weeks more we shall continue these marriage festivities with fresh mirth and entertainment every night.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf *behowls*[1] the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task *fordone*[2].
Now the *wasted brands do*[3] glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
That the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his *sprite*,[4]
In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple *Hecate's*[5] team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,

[1] howls at.
[2] exhausted.
[3] embers almost burnt out.
[4] ghost.
[5] goddess of the lower world.

Enter PUCK.

Puck. At this hour, the angry lion roars with hunger and the ferocious wolf howls at the moon; the drowsy peasant sleeps, wearied with his hard labour; the consumed logs glow red on the fire; while the shrieking of the owls leads the miserable wretch who lies on a sick bed to brood over his death. At this hour the graves opening their mouths wide give forth, each one, a ghost, to flit past the church-yard paths. And at this hour, we fairies, who roam round the globe by the side of the chariot of Hecate goddess of three-fold divinity wherever darkness reigns, as sure upon its track as dreams, are blithe and frolicsome. Not the slightest sound shall disturb

Now are *frolic*[1] : not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house:
I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

Enter OBERON *and* TITANIA *with their train.*

Obe. Through the house give glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire ;
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier;
And this ditty, after me,
Sing, and dance it trippingly.

Tita. First, *rehearse*[2] your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note:
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place.
[*Song and dance.*

[1] merry.

[2] recite.

the dwellers of this sacred place blessed by the fairies; and come with my broom to clear this dwelling behind the door and keep it dust-free.

Enter OBERON *and* TITANIA, *with their train.*

Obe. As the fires in the house have gone out, light up the dark rooms with the glow of your fairy half-light. Every elf and fairy should step as lightly as birds from the bushes. Sing after me this song and dance a light tripping dance.

Tit. Repeat the song first from your memory giving a musical note to every word; then with hands entwined, we will sing and dance in a circle giving our blessings to this house.

[*Song and dance.*

Obe. Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be;
And the issue there *create*[1]
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be;
And the *blots*[2] of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand;
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
Nor mark *prodigious*,[3] such as are
Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy *take his gait*;[4]
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace

[1] created.
[2] defects.
[3] of evil omen.
[4] take his way.

Obe. Now every fairy shall wander about this house until dawn; Titania and I will go together to the chamber where Theseus and Hippolyta sleep and bless their conjugal bed so that their children shall ever be happy and prosperous. All the three pairs of lovers will always remain faithful in love. Their children shall be free from all natural blemishes and shall not bear mole, hare-lip (lip cleft in the middle), scar, or any ill-omened mark which is looked upon with horror or regarded as hateful in a new-born child. Now let every fairy go about every room of this palace, with this blessed dew from the flowers, and bestow on the house peace and tran-

And the owner of it blest
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away; make no stay;
Meet me all by break of day.

[*Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.*

Puck. If we *shadows*[1] have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding[2] but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
If you pardon, we will mend:
And, as I am an honest Puck,

[1] spirits.

[2] producing nothing else.

quillity; the owner shall be blest with perpetual happiness and security. Hurry up, fairies, do not stay here, but return at dawn.

[*Exeunt* OBERON, TITANIA *and train.*)

Puck. If we spirits have offended you, all you have to do is to imagine that you were asleep when these visions appeared to you. Then everything will be well, and you will not blame this slight and fanciful subject of merriment which has given you nothing more than a dream. If you pardon us, we will do better next time. I give you my word as an honest

[1]undeserved good fortune.
[2]hissing.
[3]clap.
[4]make.

If we have *unearned luck*[1]
Now to 'scape *the serpent's tongue*[2]
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call:
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands,[3] if we be friends,
And Robin shall *restore*[4] amends [*Exit*.

fairy that if we are so lucky as to escape being hissed, though we do not deserve it, then we will shortly produce for you something better which will make ample amends. If I do not keep my word, you may call me a liar. Farewell to everyone; applaud us by clapping your hands, if we have given you pleasure, and trust to Robin Goodfellow for your recompense.

[*Exit*.

NOTES ON MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

ACT I

SCENE I

Summary of the Scene—In the opening scene of this drama almost all the important human characters appear. The scene is laid in Athens. Theseus, the Duke, discusses with Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. the preparations of their marriage which is about to take place. Egeus appears with his daughter Hermia followed by her two suitors Lysander whom Hermia loves, and Demetrius chosen by her father. Egeus prays that the Duke should either compel Hermia to marry Demetrius or enforce the ancient law of Athens according to which the father can give his daughter in marriage to any one he likes. The Duke tries in vain to persuade Hermia to obey her father and says that should she decline, she must die or retire to a convent. The Duke grants a few days to the lovers during which they should think over the matter and make up their minds. After all but Hermia and Lysander depart, the lovers decide to leave Athens so that they may marry at a place where the Athenian law cannot touch them. Accordingly they appoint a meeting-place for the next night. At this stage Helena, who loves Demetrius, enters and is told about the plan of Lysander and Hermia.

Dramatic Significance :—The opening scenes of the Shakespearean dramas are almost always very important.

Here in this scene we get an idea of what has preceded and what is to follow. We are told of the adventures of Theseus and of the way in which he has won Hippolyta.

We learn, moreover, that their marriage is about to take place. Then, again, many of the important characters of the play appear here and we can, to some extent, foresee the course of events to follow. The chief strands that make up the fabric of the tale can be noticed here as they begin to weave themselves into a plot. The proposed celebrations in connection with Theseus's marriage lead to the Interlude to be staged by Bottom and his crew. The love-tangle that arises out of cross-purposes and conflicting passions suggests the plot. The decision of the lovers and of the interlude actors to meet in the same wood connects the human story with the fairy drama. Thus the complex fabric of the plot is, to a great degree, achieved even in this scene. In addition to all this, the different characters are cleverly outlined here and we can, to a large extent, anticipate how they will grow.

Explanation. LINES 3—6. (1) *But, O, methinks...... ...youngman's revenue*—These lines are spoken by Theseus in his opening speech in Act I, Scene I.

Theseus is in love with Hippolyta whom he is about to marry. To the lover the day of marriage naturally appears slow in approaching. So he fancies that the old moon is waning rather tardily and thus delaying the approach of the new moon when the marriage will be solemnized. He therefore likens the apparently tarrying moon to a long-lived step-mother or a widow having a life-interest in a portion of her husband's property which is her dower, and thus keeping the heir out for a long time from the possession of that portion which will be his only after her death. Similarly the moon delays the realization of Theseus's desire to possess Hippolyta.

Notes. *Lingers* = (used transitively in a causative sense) = causes to linger ; delays ; hinders the realization of.

Methinks=It seems to me. [From Anglo-Saxon—Me=dative+*thyncan*=to seem (and **not** *A.S. Thencan=to thinh.*)

Dowager=widow with rights of dower. She enjoys a life-interest in a part of her husband's property and keeps the heir out for the full possession of his estate as long as she lives.

Dowager—from *dowage=dow age*—from French—*dover* =to endow (Latin—*dotare*).

Withering out—(*a*) hindering for sometime or delaying the full possession of.

(*b*) Dwindling ; wasting.

Explanation. LINES 30—35. *Thou hast......youth*—These lines are spoken by Egeus to Lysander (Act I, Scene I) who, the former believes, has made love to his daughter Hermia in a tricky manner without feeling any genuine passion and has thus cleverly stolen per heart as all insincere lovers do.

Egeus says—"You have, O Lysander, sung, in moonlight at my daughter's window, insincere love-songs in a voice affecting real passion and stealthily stamped yourself on her youthful imagination with the help of various love-tokens such as rings, bracelets of your hair, trinkets, knick-knacks, sweetmeats, flowers and many other fancifully-devised presents—trifles by means of which impressionable youth is strongly influenced."

Notes. *Hast...........window sung=i.e.,* serenaded. Serenading means singing love-songs at the window of the sweetheart at night.

Feigning voices=voices affecting genuine love.

Feigning love=simulated love ; insincere passion apparently real.

Stolen.........fantasy=stamped yourself steathily on her youthful fancy or imagination.

The tender and impressionable heart of Hermia is like a soft material on which a stamp or mark can be made, say, with a seal, and Lysander with his affected love is like a seal.

Fantasy=fancy ; love, here, loving imagination.

Gawds=gawdy toys ; cheap and showy trinkets that please the eye. (From Latin *gaudium*=gladness, (joy.)—Ornaments cheap and showy.

Conceits=love-tokens fancifully devised. Cleverly-invented gifts of curious and fantastic device.

Knacks=Knick-knacks.

Nosegay=a bunch of flowers.

Prevailment=inducement ; influence.

Unhardened=soft, tender, impressionable.

Explanation. LINES 74—78. *Thrice blessed......single blessedness.*—These lines are taken from the speech of Theseus (Act I, Sc. I.)· Hermia asks the Duke what punishment will be inflicted on her if she refuses to marry Demetrius, the man of her father's choice. Theseus says that she will for ever have to live the life of a nun in a cloister. The Duke then discusses the merits and defects of single life as against those of marriage. Theseus says that those women are indeed supremely happy who can so control their natural impulses and desires as to be able to pass through the dreary journey of virgin life with patient endurance. But so far as the more earthly aspect of womanly happiness is concerned, the girl who marries, tastes the sweets of love and gives herself up to her husband for the perpetuation of her physical and mental grace through her children, is happier than the one who lives and sickens away without the blessings of marriage. This truth the Duke illustrates with a metaphor. The rose, which is distilled into scent and the fragrance of which is

thus perpetuated and made available to people for enjoyment, is happier than the one which withers on the branch and wastes its sweetness in the wood.

Notes. *Pilglimage*—(here) dreary journey of life. Shakespeare often uses this word in this sense.

Thrince blessed...pilgrimage—Evidently a tribute meant for Elizabeth, the virgin queen, who might have been present when the play was first staged.

Explanation. LINES 79—82. *So will I......sovereignty*—These lines are spoken by Hermia (Act I, Sc. 1) in reply to the Duke's remarks that if he refuses to marry Demetrius, she will have to live the life of a nun and wither away like a rose on the tree untasted by men.

Hermia says, "I shall live and die a virgin, like a rose withering on the stalk, rather than give up my privilege of maidenhood and recognize that person as my lord and husband to whose unwanted sway my soul refuses to submit."

Notes. *Virgin patent*—patent of virginity ; privilege of maidenhood.

Unwished yoke = unwanted sway ; the control which I do not like, which is disgusting to me.

Explanation. LINES 141 — 149 *Or, if......come to confusion.*—These lines are spoken by Lysander (Act I, Sc. I.) when he is conversing with Hermia on the subject of love after Theseus and others have left.

Lysander says that the course of true love never runs smooth. Often there is difference regarding birth and rank between lovers or disparity of age, and sometimes love depends upon the choice of friends and relatives. But even if there happens to be a happy correspondence between lovers

in respect of birth, age and choice, love is often liable to the destructive influence of disease, war or death. It thus passes away as swiftly as a sound or a shadow and is brief as a dream. It is transitory as the lightning, that in a coal-black night discovers, as with a sudden flash of passion, both earth and sky, and before any one has time to say "Behold", it is again swallowed up by daikness. Thus all good and bright things (such as love, hope, faith, etc.) come to ruin quicky.

Notes. *Sympathy*—fitness ; harmony ; happy correspondence. (*i.e.* in respect of birth, age and choice).

Momentany = momentary—(It is the earlier form from French *Momentaine*, Latin, *Momentaneus.*)

Collied night = Coal-black night, black as with coal ; covered, as it were, with smuts of coal.

Compare the word *Collier* which comes from Middle English *Col* or coal having the suffix '*er*' and the usual putting in of '*i*' for facilitating utterance.

Confusion = ruin, destruction.

Shakespeare often uses this word in this particular sense.

Brief as lightning...devour it up—Compare—Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Sc. 2

"The lightning, which does cease to be

Ere one can say 'It lightens.'

LINES 204—7. *Before...hell*—Hermia says this to Helena in course of their conversation when the latter longs to possess the former's beauty which, she thinks, she lacks and which, she fancies, has fascinated Demetrius, whom Helena loves.

"Before I saw and loved Lysander, Athens was to me a place of supreme happiness. How great must be the influence

and enchantment of my love (loved one—Lysander) in view of the fact that he has changed this land of bliss into one of curse and suffering !" The suggestion is that Athens which was her happy home ere long and which now hinders their union, has become, owing to her love for Lysander, a cursed place for her.

N. B. Johnson, however, interprets "my love," not as "my beloved or Lysander," but as "my love for Lysander."

LINES 232--241. *Things base and vile...perjured everywhere.* —These lines are taken from the soliloquy of Helena. (Act I, Sc. I—end) when Lysander and Hermia have just departed and she is left alone on the stage. She philosophises on the vagaries and whimsicalities of love. Love, she thinks, has a strange transfiguring power. Even vile objects, devoid of any real merit or virtue and bearing no proportion to the exaggerated value which love ascribes to them, can be transformed into shapely and dignified things by the transmuting influence of love.

A lover in his choice is guided by the passion of his mind rather than by his eyes, which seldom see truly. Even if his beloved is ugly, he fails to see the ugliness, and thinks her lovey. Hence it is that the ancients have described love as a blind winged god, in that he makes the lover devoid of correct vision. The lover's mind has not even a particle of judgment or reason and he is always hasty in his choice and impetuous in his passions.

The blindness and the wings of Cupid, the god of love, symbolize this haste and this impetuosity respectively.

The lover in his choice of the beloved is often freakish and whimsical as a child and is thus misled. Therefore Cupid is imagined as a boy. As boys full of jesting spirit

swear falsely for mere fun, similarly the lover always perjures himself in the most whimsical manner.

Notes. *Holding no quantity*=(1)bearing no proportion to the exaggerated value ascribed to them by the lover.

(2) *Quantity*=virtue, worth, substance, efficacy, strength,

Form=beauty, shapeliness.

Dignity=majesty.

Winged Cupid......fluid=Cupid is the god of love in classical mythology *Cf* the Indian god of love·—"*Kama*" or "*Madana*." He is described in classical legends as a boy having a pair of wings and a bow and arrows. In Indian mythology 'Madan' has *Fooladhanoo*=or a flowery bow and flowery arrows.

Blind=The conception of the blindness of Cupid is not to be found in classical literature or mythology. It appears to be a mediaeval idea and is possibly found in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* for the first time. Chaucer appears to have been indebted to Boccaccio's *Deca Meron* for this idea.

Cf Knight's Tale—Lins 1963—65
"Biforn hir stood hir sone Cupids,
Up—on his shulders winges had de be two ;
And *blind* he was, as it is ofte sene".
Figure=stand for ; indicate, is a symbol of ;
Unheedy=careless or heedles ; rash.

Nor hath......taste=love has not even a particle of judg· ment or reason-

Cf="To love and to be wise is not given to man."
Beguiled=misguided ; led astray, cheated.
Waggish=full of practical jests.
In game=sportively ; for mere fun.

ACT I.

SCENE II.

Summary. In this scene we find some Athenian artisans, *viz.*, Quince, Bottom Snug, Flute, Snout and Starveling discussing, at Quince's house, a play on the classical subject of Pyramus and Thisbe, which they mean to stage on the occasion of the Duke's marriage. Different parts are assigned to the several actors according to their fitness, and Bottom, the Weaver, who has an exaggerated notion of his histrionic abilities and who thinks in a very funny way that he is good enough for every part in the play, animate or inanimate, male or female, human or subhuman, is unanimously selected for the roll of Pyramus, the hero. They then decide to meet next day "in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight" for rehearsal. After this they disperse.

Dramatic Significance. In this scene we find how the play within the play, a common device with Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists (*Cf* Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Fletcher's part in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*), is going to be interwoven with the fairy drama and the human drama of this story. These artisans are going to meet at night in the enchanted wood where Oberon and his crew reign supreme. Bottom, the funnyman of the Interlude, is the connecting link between the human laughter and the fairy mirth of the comedy. As an actor he excites fun in the human world, and as a transformed ass and lover of Titania, he is a source of exuberant laughter to Oberon, Puck and the rest of the fairies. This scene, moreover, with its gentle satire on the rough and uncultured actors, adds very much to the comedy of the play. Then again, we have for the first time sketched for us here some of the realistic types of this drama—characters that put us in mind of the

rough and ready folks of the Elizabethan England with their little foibles and absurdities, their home-spun realism and their peculiar tricks of phrasing and *malapropism*. The contemporary lore on strangecraft has been obliquely hinted at in a mood of sweet banter here and familiar stage-types, current jests and topical allusions have made the scene quite lively and interesting.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Summary. The curtain rises and discovers a scene in the wood where Puck, the jester and assistant of Oberon, king of the elfland, and a fairy are talking. From their conversation it appears that Oberon and his queen Titania have quarrelled over a fair changeling boy who has been procured from India and brought up by Titania and whom Oberon wants to be one of his retinue. In course of their talk, moreover, they tell us something about the nature of the fairies, in general and of Puck or Robin Goodfellow in particular. Then enter Oberon and Titania with their train and begin to quarrel. We are told how owing to their wranglings there have occurred abnormal changes in the ordinary course of nature, and floods, failure of crops, pestilence and death have followed. Oberon demands the boy from Titania in vain and the latter departs in anger. Oberon then meditates revenge and asks Puck to go and find out a flower called love-in-idleness, the property of which is that if its juice is poured on the eyes of a sleeper, he or she will fall in love with the first living object seen on waking. Oberon wants to try this on Titania when she will be sleeping and to arrange things in such a way that she may find some vile object as she opens her eyes. Puck goes in search of this flower and Oberon stands on the stage unseen when

Helena enters doting on Demetrius who cruelly repulses her. Oberon takes pity on the girl and intends to make things smooth for her with the help of this enchanted flower. As the lovers leave, Puck re-enters with the flower. Oberon then takes the flower for bewitching Titania and gives some of it to Puck with instructions that the latter should anoint the eyes of the "disdainful youth" (Demetrius) when he sleeps, and should arrange things in such a way that when he wakes, the next thing he sees may be this "sweet Athenian lady" (*i.e.* Helena). Puck a agrees to do the behest of Oberon and they depart.

The Dramatic Significance of the Scene—This scene brings us to the very heart of the fairy romance of the play. The shimmering world of dreams and delusions, of loves and jealousies and freaks of passion, of moonlight and nocturnal blooms, of shy glimmers and fugitive half-lights, of non-moral impulses and impalpable fantasies—a world where the intensities of life dissolve into smoke in the spooky air and "where nothing is but what is not"—has been created with a remarkable mastery by Shakespeare in this scene. Plenty of lyrism with a true delight in the delicate beauties of nature is to be found here. We see moreover, that the fairy tale and the story of the lovers begin to be organically united in this scene. Complications that help the development of the plot ensue and suggest further complications later on arising out of the mistake of Puck.

Explanation. LINES 102—115. *The human mortals...... which is which.* These lines are taken from the long speech of Titania addressed to Oberon in Act II, Sc. I, where the fairy king and queen are quarrelling over a beautiful changeling. Titania says that their quarrel has disturbed the normal course of nature resulting in flood, failure of crops and death. She continues this strain and says that men who are

not immortal like the fairies, are now fed up with this sort of dreary spring and summer—briniging disease and death, and are yearning for the winter nights ringing with songs and prayers. Their quarrel has very much enraged the moon on whose influence tidal changes depend and who has charged the whole atmosphere with humidity so that diseases like catarrhs, coughs and colds (which are caused by moisture in the air) have broken out with virulence. And owing to their rupture resulting in this elemental disorder, the regular succession of seasons has been disturbed. The hoar-frosts of winter fall on and mar the freshness of the red rose of summer, while a fragrant wreath of summer buds mocks the old head of the winter-god, sparsely covered with white and frosty hair. The spring, the summer, the fruitful autumn and the fierce winter all change their usual dress which is the distinctive feature of each, and the bemused humanity cannot tell one season from another by looking at their products.

Notes. *The human mortals*—(1) men (among other mortal animals).

(2) Mortal men (as distinguished from the fairies some of whom are mortal and some immortal). Here Titania and Oberon are immortal no doubt. But in *Huon of Bordeaux*, which is one of those books to which shakespeare apppears to have been indebted for the name Oberon,—Oberon himself dies at the end of the romance.

Lack their winter here—(1) one suggested emendation is "winter cheer" in the place of "*here*." The meaning then would be—The human mortals, fed up with an unnatural summer, *lack or want* or long for the winter with its usual cheerful accompaniments, such as songs, prayers, carols, etc., etc.

(2) *Here*—in this region—the very character of winter is changed, so that men cannot enjoy its blessings such as carols, etc., etc.

Therefore—(1) If it is connected with the line immediately preceding it, and if a full stop is given after the line, "The human mortals.............. ..here", the meaning would be like this..............."Because we have not sung proper hymns to the Moon goddess due to the disturbed condition of our minds, therefore she (the moon)......washes all the air" etc., etc.

(2) *Therefore*—For this reason—because of our quarrel.

The moon, etc.—It refers to the influence of the moon on tidal changee and snggests the popular belief that as a "watery planet" or a planet having water in it and closely associated with the waters of the sea, the moon can make the air humid and thus cause various diseases which atmospheric moisture generates.

Washes—charges with moisture, with water-vapour;.

Rheumatic diseases—wets in the Shakespearean sense, diseases such as cause flowing or flux of rheum (*e.g.* catarrhs, colds, coughs etc.)

—not *rheumatism* in the modern sense—though that too is sometimes caused by cold and moisture.

Tho ough—through.

Distemperature—(1) Perturbation, rupture, disturbance of harmony—*i.e.* quarrel between Oberon and Titania.

(2) Disharmony or disorder in the natural course of things—such as unnatural and disorganized seasons etc.

(3) Our rupture resulting in elemental diturbance.

(Both (1) and (2) are continued).

Hem—winter-god (Latin).

Childing—prolific ; productive ; fertile ; fruitful. (Autumn is the harvest time and the season of "mellow fruitfulness "—Cf *Keats's Ode to Autumn.*

Increase—produce.

Livery—dress ; here look. Elizabethan English "Any dress or garb." Originally 'livery' meant "whatever was given or *delivered* " by a lord to his household, whether bread, dress or wages.

Cf French—*habits de livree*—"*clothes served out yearly to domestics*." From French *livrer*—Low Latim, *liberare*—"to abondon."

Cf Millon's L'Allegro—

" Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight."

LINES 148—168. *Thou remember'st......love—in idleness* (For explanation see paraphrase—No explanation is required.)

Possible historical allusion. Different critics try to find various allusions in this passage to some contemporary historical events.

(1) Warburton, for example, thinks that the *mermaid*' refers to Mary, Queen of Scots, who is so described because like a mermaid she dwelt in her island home surrounded by the waves and because she was lovely and faithless. The critic takes 'Dolphin' to mean Dauphin, king of France, her husband The "rude sea", according to him, suggests the sea-encircled Scotland, which was in a state of confusion during the Regency but which was retored to order on Mary's return from France in 1561. The "stars", in Warburtons' opinion, refer to the Earls of Westmoreland and Northumberland who espoused the cause of Mary, plotted against Elizabeth and thus perished.

(2) But Warburton's interpretation is looked upon with some degree of indifference by modern scholars.

Undoubted compliment is paid in this passage to the virgin majesty of Queen Elizabeth in the expression 'Fair vestal.' But it is highly probable that there is a reference here to the memorable visit which Elizabeth paid to the Earl of Leicestor at Kenilworth castle in July 1575. There seem to be allusions here to the festivities and love-intrigues in this connection.

(*a*) Robert Laneham, a London trader, who spent some days at Kenilworth on this occasion, in a letter to a friend fully discribed this visit. A Masque on a lake in the park is graphically pictured in the letter. Many legendary beings figured in this masque on the water—*Triton on a Mermaid* and *Arion on a Dolphin* singing a sweet song. At night there was a splendid display of fireworks which are described in the letter as "*stars coruscant*". May be, Shakspeare read this description or went presonally to Kenilworth on this occasion, the place being only 13 miles from Stratford on Avon. Some critics suppose that Edward Arden, a relative of Shakespeare on his mother's side, who was at the castle about this time, took the boy, then only 11, to this place.

(*b*) *Cupid taking a certain aim* has been supposed to refer to the attempts of Leicester to win the hand of Elizabeth. The "little western flower" has been taken to refer either to Lettice, countess of Essex, with whom Leicester was in love or to Amy Rolesart.

We should not forget, however, that it is always risky to make any definite assertions regarding all these details.

LINES—232—Allusion—*Apollo.........chase.* **Explanation** The line is taken from the speech of Helena addressed to Demetrius when the latter is fleeing and the girl is running after him. Helena suggests that it is in the fitness of things

that the male-lover should run after the female. Here, however, the normal order is reversed and Helena, contrary to the natural law and to legendary tradition, is chasing Demetrius.

Allusion—

Daphne was a lovely nymph whom Appollo loved and chased while the former fled from the enamoured God. She was changed into a laurel-tree when she was on the point of being overtaken.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

245. *Fare thee well*—go, and good fortuns go with you.

250. *Ox-lips*—a kind of cowslip not often found wild.

Nodding—hanging its head as if in sleep.

251. *Luesions*—sweet.

Woodbine—honney sickle.

252. *Musk-rose*—a species of rose prized more for its sweet scent than for its beauty.

Eglantine—it is more commonly called sweet-brise.

253. *Of the night*;—during the night.

254. *Dances and delight*—delightful dances (*i.e.*, of her attendant fairies.

255. *Throws* ;—casts.

Enamelled —glittering like enamel, a glass-like substance made of glass and metals fused together.

256. *Weed*—robe, garment.

257. *Streak* —touch softly, *i.e.*, anoint.

258. *Fantacies*—fancies.

261. *Disdainful* —*i.e.*, of her love.

263—264.—*cf.* III 2. 347—351. (Where Puck explains his mistake).

266. *Fond on* —foolishly in love with.

267. *Look thou meet*—take care to meet.

The first cock crow —when the cock crows for the first time.

ACT II.

SCENE II.

Summary. Titania and her train enter, and at Titania's desire her attendant fairies sing a fairy song to lull her to sleep. As she sleeps the fairies go away. Oberon enters and aooints her eyes with the magic juice of the flower so that when she wakes she may fall in love with whatever creature may happen to be near. He then goes away, leaving Titania asleep.

Lysander and Hermia enter. Hermia is tired with wandering in the wood. They, therefore, propose to sleep. Lysander wishes to sleep with Hermia, but she makes him sleep at a distance from her, saying that modesty requires it.

Puck enters and says that he has wandered through the forest but has been unable to find any Athenian on whose eyes he might squeeze the flower. Just then he sees Lysander and thinking that he was the person intended by Oberon squeezes the flower on his eyes.

Enter Demetrius and Helena, running. Helena implores Demetrius to stop but he goes away leaving her alone. Helena sees Lysandar and wakes him up. He wakes up under the influence of the magic juice and expresses his love for Helena much to the latter's surprise. In fact Helena thinks that Lysander is insulting her and goes away from him. She has not seen Hermia. Lysander leaves

Hermia sleeping and follows Helena. Hermia awakes having dreamt that a serpent is crawling on her breast and calls for Lysandar. She is greatly shocked at not finding him, and goes in search of him.

Significance of the Scene.

This is a very important scene, for it is here that the complications in the relations of the lovers start. These complications are due to Puck's mistake in anointing the eyes of the wrong person. Oberon had intended that Demetrius's eyes should be anointed so that he might fall in love with Helena. But in this scene Puck makes a mistake with the result that Lysander has lost his love for Hermia and has fallen in love with Helena.

ACT II.

SCENE II.

1. *Roundel*—dance in a circle.

2. *The third part of a minute*—In the fairy world, where everything is diminutive, even time is measured by a standard shorter than the ordinary one.

3. *Canker* —a worm that eats into fruits and plants and flowers.

4. *Rere-mice*—bats.

Leathern wings —"leathern" because bats have no feathers on their wings.

8. *Offices*—duties, employments.

9. *Double*—forked.

10. *Thorny*—spiny. Hedgehogs have spines which they can erect at will.

12. *Philomel* ;=*Philomela*,—a classical name for the nightingale.

27—34. These 'trochaic' lines have a dainty, tripping rhythm most appropriate to dainty fairy beings. Note, howl

often, for this reason, Shakespeare makes his fairies use this verse.

30. *Ounce*—a kind of lynx—an animal belonging to the cat family.

35. *You faint* ;—you have become faint.

45. *O, take......innocence* — "Understand the meaning of my innocence or my innocent meaning. Let no suspicion of ill enter thy mind." (Johnson).

46. *i.e.*, true lovers understand each other instinctively : no mutual suspicion makes them misinterpret each other's words.

49. *Interchained* :—linked together.

52. There is an obvious pun here : *lie* means (1) 'to lie down', (2) 'to tell a lie'.

54. *Beshrew* ;—alas for my ill-manners.

57. *Human* ;—courteous, kind.

61. *Ne'er alter* ;—may it never alter.

62. *Amen*—'so be it'; most commonly used at the end of a prayer.

63 *End life*—may life end.

65. *i.e.*, may you have half of what you have wished for me—I do not want *all* the rest of sleep.

68. *Approve*—make trial of.

69. *Stirring*—exciting.

71—75. Of course Oberon meant Demetrius and Helena; but as Lysander and Hermia too wear "weeds (dress) of Athens," by which Puck was to recognise the lovers, his mistake is natural.

73. *Despised*—who despised.

74. *Sound*—soundly.

75. *Dank*—deep.

77. *This lack-love*—this churlish fellow so wanting in ove towards her who loves him.

78. *Churl*—boorish fellow.

Owe—possess.

His—its.

80. *Let love......eyelid*—may love banish sleep from your eyes.

82. I leave you to wake with this result after I have gone.

86. *Darkling*—in the dark.

87. *On thy peril*—at your risk.

88. *Fond*—foolish.

89. *My grace*—the favour shown me, *i.e.*, by Demetrius.

96. *No marvel*—it is not surprising at all.

97. *i.e.*, fly my presence as that of a monster.

99. *Compare with*—seek to rival.

Sphery—starlike, celestial.

103. *And run* ;—I do so and will run.

Run through fire—do anything ; a proverbial figure of speech to express devotion.

106. *i.e.*, how well does the bearer of that name deserve to perish at my hands.

110. *Be content*—be calm.

111. *Content with Hermia!*—Should I be satisfied with Hermia?

114. *Raven......dove*—a proverbial contrast.

Raven also alludes to Hermia's dark complexion.

118. *I......ripe not*—I have not been mature enough.

119. *i.e.*, now that I reach the highest point—the full development—of intelligence.

Skill—sagacity, mental discernment.

120. *Marshal*—leader, director.

121. *O'erlook*—read over, pause.

122. *Love's richest book*—her eyes.

124. *At your hands* —from you.
126. *Nor never* —emphatic repetition.
128. *Flout*—mock at.
129. *Good troth*—in good troth (truth.)
131. *Perforce* —of necessity.
132. *Gentleness* —kindness, or 'good breeding.'
139. *Do leave* —abjure.
140. *Heresies* —false doctrines.
143. *Address* —direct, make ready.
144. *Be her knight* —swear yourself to her service and honour.
147. *Ay me* —alas for me !
For pity—how piteous is my case.
149. *Methought* ;—it seemed to me.
Away ;—completely.
Eat ;—the past tense=*ate*.
150. *Prey*—the act of preying.
151. *Removed*—have you moved away ?
152. *Out of hearing* ;—have you gone so far from me that my cries do not reach your ears?
153. *Alack* —alas.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Summary. Titania is lying asleep in the wood. Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling enter and set about to rehearse the play of Pyramus and Thisby which they have to act before the Duke. The rehearsal is a ludicrous affair.

Puck enters unseen, and seeing the performances of the rustic artisans proposes to play some mischief. In the course of acting Bottom the weaver who is playing the part of Pyramus

has to go off the "stage." Puck follows him : when Bottom re-enters he is a very changed Pyramus indeed, for he has an ass's head on his shoulders. The other actors run away from him in fear. Bottom does not understand the cause of his companions' behaviour and thinks that they are only trying to make an ass of him and to frighten him. In order to appear unafraid Bottom begins to sing. Titania awakens and being under the influence of the magic juice falls in hove with the ass-headed Bottom. She introduces all her train to Bottom and takes him to her Bower.

Significance of the Scene.

Here Shakespeare follows his usual plan. The complications that are developed in the first two Acts are brought to a crisis in the third Act, (*i e.,* about the middle of the play). There Lysander was made to fall in love with Helena, thus giving rise to the first complications. Here Titania falls in love with Bottom and thus the fairy part of the play becomes interwoven with the rustic. But we should observe that the main cause of the confusion is the love-juice.

The rehearsal of the play by Bottom and his friends, with the very crude stage properties they use is Shakespeare's good-humoured parody of the conditions prevailing in Elizabethan stages.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

2. *Pat, pat*—in the very nick of time, exactly, just as it should be.

4. *Tiring-houses*—where the actors changed their *attire* (dresses) ; dressing room.

7. *Bully Bottom*—'friend Bottom'.

12. *By'r lakin*—by our little lady, *i.e.,* the Virgin Mary ; used in an affectionate sense.

22. *Written in eight and six*—in verses alternately of eight and six syllables. It was a very common ballad measure.

28. *God shield us* !—God protect us ! Bottom is horrified at the very idea.

35. *Defect*—effect. Shakespeare is purposely using the wrong word.

40. *There*—at that point in his speech. Malone thinks that there is here an allusion to a contemporary incident. "There was a spectacle presented to Queen Elizabeth upon the water, and among others Harry Goldingham was to present *Arion* upon the dolphin's back but finding his voice to be very hoarse and unpleasant, when he came to perform it, he tears off his diguise, and swears he was none of Arion, not he, but even honest Harry Goldingham ; which blunt discovery pleased the queen better than if he had gone through in the right way."………(Merry Passages and Jeasts, M. S. Harl. 6395).

53. *Disfigure*—figure, personate.

56. *Did talk…wall* ;—in the story, Pyramus and Thisbe lived in adjoining houses. They made a hole in the partition wall through which they carried on their love-making.

60. *Rough-cast*—plaster mixed with small pebbles.

67. *Hempen homespuns*—coarse fellows (rude mechanicals).

69. *Toward* ;—about to begin.

82. *Triumphant* ;—rearing itself aloft.

84. *Juvenal*—youth.

89, 90. *It is……true*—*i.e.*, you should enter to speak your speech directly. Flute has uttered the words '*never tire.*'

108. *Translated*—transformed, changed.

110. *To make an ass of me*—*i.e.*, to make me seem a foolish, stupid fellow.

114. *Ousel cock*—the male black bird, whose bill is of a bright orange colour.

116. *Throstle*—the song thrush.

117. *Little*—shrill.

121. *Plain-song cuckoo* ;—the cuckoo whose note is without variation.

122. *Cry 'cuckoo'* ;—the bird's note was popularly thought to warn husbands mockingy of the ill-behaviour of their wives.

125. *Give a bird the lie*—tell a bird that it is lying.

132. *Reason and love*—*cf.* the old proverb that a man cannot love and be wise!

135. *Gleek*—jeer, joke in a satirical way.

138. *To serve mine own turn*—to suit my purpose.

141. *Rate* ;—estimate.

142. *The summer......state*—the very summer is my slave and follows me wherever I go.

183. *Apricocks*—apricots, *Dew-berries* the fruit of the dew-berry bush. a kind of bramble; they resemble small blackberries.

155. *Humble-bees*—humming bees.

156. *And for......thighs* :—and crop their thighs of the wax with which they are laden, to make tapers with.

157. *At the......eyes*—as the light of the glow-worm is in its tail.

159. *Painted*—gaudily decorated.

160. *To fan......from*—to keep off from, using the wings as fans, shades.

161. *Nod*;—bow.

166. *I cry.. ...heartily* ;—from the bottom of my heart I beg your pardon.

169. *I shall desire......acquaintance*—I should like to come better acquainted with you.

170. *I shall......you*—I shall venture to make use of your services.

Cobweb—an old-fashioned remedy to stop effusion of blood.

173. *Squash*—an unripe peascod.

179. *That same ox beef*—that ox beef which you and I know so well.

180. *Your patience*—*i.e.* submissiveness under the misfortune of being devoured by the cowardly giant, ox-beef: which misfortune (not, of course, the pungent strength of the mustard!) has often brought the tears into Bottom's eyes.

184. *With a watery eye*—the watery look of the moon, caused by vapour hanging round it, indicates rainy weather.

186. *Enforced chastity*—violence done to some chaste maiden.

ACT III.

SCENE II.

Summary. Puck inform Oberon as to what he has done to Bottom and Titania—how Titania under the influence of the magic flower is in love with Bottom with his ass's head. Oberon is glad to hear that things have turned out so well. He then inquires about the Athenian whose eyes Puck was to have anointed. Just then Demetrius and Hermia enter. It is now clear that Puck has anointed the eyes of the wrong man. Demetrius is pressing his suit on Hermia who, however, is anxious to find Lysander, and goes away from him. Demetrius lies down and sleeps. Oberon now touches the eyes of Demetrius having sent Puck to bring Helena there by some illusion.

Lysander and Helena now enter, Lysander offering his love to Helena. Helena thinks that he is not serious. Just then

Demetrius wakes and seeing Helena falls in love with her, being under the influence of magic. Helena now thinks that the two men are mocking her to insult her. Hermia comes in on the scene, having directed her way by means of the sound of the lovers' voices, it being now dark. Lysander disclaims his love for Hermia. Helena suspects that Hermia too has joined with the men to mock her. Hermia is dazed by the turn of affairs. A squabble now ensues. Lysander and Demetrius are about to fight. Helena and Hermia also quarrel.

The fairies now interpose and prevent a conflict by causing the four to wander about until they are tired, when they fall asleep. Puck repairs his blunder by anointing Lysander's eyes in order to dispel the illusion caused by the love-juice.

Significance of the scene.

The complication of the main plot is now complete. Through Puck's mistake the love affairs of the lovers have become badly mixed up. But just as the complication arose out of Puck's doings so the solution also will come through the interposition of the fairies. The connection between the fairy world and the world of men is made complete. The scene ends with Puck's assurance that all will go well.

This scene contains some fine descriptions of night. We are also made to understand the physical differences between Hermia and Helena. It is probable that Shakespeare made one short and the other tall because one of the two boy actors who played the roles of women was tall and the other short. We have similar pairs of young ladies in other plays too, *e.g.* *As You Like It.*

3. *Which she.....extremity*—which, from the potency of the drug, she will be compelled to love with ridiculous passion.

5. *Night-rule*—night-work.

7. *Close*—private, retired.

9. *Patches*—fools ; the word in this sense is probably due to the patched parti-coloured dresses worn by fools and jesters.

13. *Shallowest*—most stupid.

Thick-skin—'block-head.'

Barren—dull.

Sort—company.

14. *Presented*—acted the part of.

17. *Nole*—a comical word for 'head.'

21. *Russet-pated choughs*—grey headed jack-daws.

Many in sort—in a great body.

31. *I led......fear*—they being in this state of distraction, I led them hither and thither in all directions.

32. *Sweet Pyramus*--said ironically, of Bottom of whose good looks they were so proud.

36. *Latched*—moistened, anointed.

48. *Being o'er shoes......deep*—having gone so far in guilt, go farther still; make your guilt complete. (Hermia suspects that Demetrius has killed Lysander.)

67. *Henceforth.........men*—henceforth be accounted a devil for thy bloody deed rather than a man !

69-70. *Durst thou have look'd*—you would not have dared to look.

O brave touch—O valiant deed !

71. *Worm*—serpent.

72. *Doubler*—used to indicate the figurative idea of duplicity, treachery, as well as the literal idea of being forked.

74. *On a mispris'd mood*—on a mistaken fancy.

84-85. In plain prose—'loss of sleep (in which sorrow may be forgotten) makes sorrow harder to bear'

91. *Some true love turned*—*i.e.*, turned false. Puck's mistake has made Lysander false to Hermia.

92-93. 'If some lover is to prove faithless because of *my* error, not through his own fickleness, lovers in general must not be held responsible for their faithlessness. The fault lies with fate, which ordains that for every one who is true there should be a million who break oath after oath.'

96. *Fancy-sick*—love-sick.

Pale of cheer—pale in countenance.

101. *The Tartar's bow*—the nomad hordes of Tartary were famous for their archery.

107. *The Venus of the sky*—the bright planet Venus.

113. *Fee*—payment.

114. *Fond pageant*—foolish show.

121. *Preposterously*—perversely.

124. *Vows so born*—vows being so born; when vows have such a birth.

129. *When truth......fray*!—"If Lysander's present protestations are true, they destroy the truth of his former vows to Hermia, and the contest between these two truths, which in themselves are holy must in the issue be devilish and end in the destruction of both." (Wright.)

131. *Nothing weigh*—*i.e.*, get no results, because his oaths to her and to Hermia will exactly counterbalance each other.

141-143. *i.e.*, 'that pure whiteness, the snow of Mount Taurus, becomes black as a crow when thou,' etc.

Taurus—a chain of mountains running through Asia from west to east, forming the southern margin of the great tableland of Central Asia.

183. *Superpraise*—praise in exaggerated and insincere terms.

157. *A trim exploit*—a pretty piece of bravery.

169. *I will none*—*i.e.*, none of her, nothing to do with her.

171. *But as......sojourn'd*—stayed for a short visit as a guest does with his host.

178. *Aby it dear*—pay dearly for it.

188. *Oes and and eyes of light*—stars.

Oes—a term commonly used for round objects.

192. *She is......confederacy*—she has banded herself together with Lysander and Demetrius.

195. *Injurious*—insulting.

199. *The sister's vows*—the vows of sisterly love; protestations of love such as two sisters would make to each other.

205. *Sampler*—a pattern; here it means a piece of work given to children to do, as a sample of their capacity.

209. *Seeming*—seemingly, apparently.

210. *A union in partition*—*i.e.*, at once united and parted.

212-14. *With two.........crest*—Douce explains, "Helena says, 'we had two seeming bodies but only one heart.' She then exemplifies her position by a simile—'we had two of the first, *i.e.*, bodies, like double coats in heraldry that belong to man and wife as one person, but which, like our single heart, have but one crest.'" Wright says, that in "the language of heraldry—when a tincture has been once mentioned in the description of a coat of arms, it is always afterwards referred to according to the order in which it occurs in the description; and a charge is accordingly said to be 'of the first,' 'of the second,' etc., if its tincture be the same as that of the field which is always mentioned first

or as that of the second or any other that has been specified."

257. *Ethiope*—dark as an Ethiopian.

No, no; he'll......,—Demetrius means that Lysander is not really trying to break loose from Hermia, *i.e.*, that he is afraid to fight.

259. A *tame man*—a coward.

260. *Hang off......cat*—cease to cling to me as a cat clings.

272. *What news*—that is a strange story to tell me that you hate me.

282. *Juggler*—cheat.

Canker-blossom—the worm that eats into blossoms. Hermia means that Helena has eaten into and destroyed Lysander's love for her.

286. *No touch*—not a particle, or perhaps='no feeling.'

288. *You counterfeit*—you pretended friend of mine.

You puppet—you doll, who in the hands of others are made to play any part they like.

290. *Now I perceive......statures*—now I see that she has been drawing an invidious comparison between herself and me as regards our height. (Helena is the taller of the two.)

296. *Thou painted Maypole*—a reference to the old custom, observed on the first of May, when villagers bedecked with ribbons and finery, assembled to dance and sing round a May-pole diagonally painted in various colours, and festooned with sprigs of May blossom, ribbons, etc. In '*painted*', Hermia hints that Helena owes her complexion to art.

300. *Curst*—ill-tempered, shrewish.

302. *A right maid*—a true maid.

310. *Your stealth*—Your stealing away=going secretly.

324. *A vixen*—a bad-tempered, quarrelsome girl.

329. *Minimus*—tiny creature.

Knot-grass—popularly supposed to hinder the growth of a child or animal.

333. *Bead*—referring not only to her size, but also to her complexion, the commonest sort of beads being black.

336-337—*i.e.*, which of us has the better claim to Helena.

338—*Cheek by jole*—cheek to cheek, *i.e.*, side by side, close together.

356. *Welkin*—sky.

857—*Acheron*—('Stream of Anguish') in classical mythology one of the rivers of the lower world. In late classical writers the name is used in a general sense to designate the whole of the lower world, and may have been so used by Shakespeare.

358. *Testy*—quarrelsome.

365. *Batty wings*—wings like those of bats, who fly abroad only in the night; hence slumberous.

379. *Night's swift dragons*—they are known for their swiftness.

Full fast—with all possible speed.

380. *Aurora's harbinger*—the fore-runner of the goddess of the dawn, *i.e.*, the morning star.

383. *In cross-ways*—suicides were formerly buried in cross-ways so that their graves instead of being kept sacred as in churchyards might be trodden upon by every wayfarer; a stake was also driven through their hearts to mark their burial.

Floods—according to Steevens, the ghosts of those who were drowned were condemned, in consequence of their not having received the rites of burial, to wander for a hundred years.

389. *The morning's love*—"by the *morning's love* I apprehend Cephalus, the mighty hunter and paramour of Aurora, is intended." (*Holt White*).

399. *Goblin*—a mischievous sprite.

402. *Drawn*—with my sword drawn.

421. *Ho, ho, ho*—the traditional cry of Robin Goodfellow or Puck.

461. *Jack shall have Jill*—every lad shall have his lass. (A proverbial expression for a happy ending, *i.e.*, an ending with a wedding; the association of *Jack and Jill* as generic names for a man and a woman is very old.)

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Summary.—The curtain rises on Titania caressing Bottom's ass's head and lavishing her favours on him. The lovely little fairies are at Bottom's beck and call, carrying out his absurd wishes. Oberon has already during her fit of infatuation for Bottom obtained the 'changeling child' from Titania, and now, having no grievance, takes pity on her. After the two have fallen asleep, Bottom in the arms of Titania, Oberon orders Puck to take off the ass's head from Bottom while he himself will release the fairy queen from the enchantment. This done, the fairy king and queen are reconciled and, leaving the two pairs of Athenian lovers and Bottom asleep, fly away at the peep of dawn. The night of fairy magic and dream is over.

May-day dawns. The horns are sounded, and Thesus, Hippolyta, Egeus and the royal retinue enter the wood to find the two pairs of lovers lying fast asleep. They are awakened, and after Demetrius has declared his love for Helena, the Duke, over-ruling Egeus, announces that the lovers shall be married in the temple at the same time as himself and Hippolyta on that very day. All of them depart for Athens. Bottom awakes and finding himself alone remembers that he has had a most rare vision.

Dramatic Significance.—This scene is dramatically very important because it marks the end of the complication and the unravelling of the entanglement. The solution, that began in the last scene by the squeezing of the herb on Lysander's eyelids in order to rectify Puck's error and make Lysander love Hermia again, makes a rapid progress here. The two complications, *viz.*, that of the Athenian lovers and that of Titania and Oberon which constituted the subject-matter of Acts II and III are satisfactorily solved in this scene. Titania and Oberon are reconciled and Bottom restored to human shape on the one hand and the three pairs including Thesus and Hippolyta are married on the other. Thus the three stories of (1) Thesus and Hippolyta, (2) the Athenian Lovers and (3) Oberon and Titania are brought to a happy conclusion in Act IV. And the way is prepared for the successful issue of the fourth story, *viz.*, of the theatrical performance by Bottom and Co. in honour of the marriage.

Notes, Explanations, etc.

2. *Amiable*—lovely, *cf.* Psalm : 'How amiable are thy tabernacles.'

2. *Coy*—caress, stroke.

10. *Mounsieur*—the spelling of the quartos and folios and a true representation of Bottom's pronunciation.

13. *Do not......action*—do not tire yourself out too much in the doing of it.

18. *Neaf*—fist.

19. *Leave your courtesy*—do not be so ceremonious. Schimdt explains 'put on your hat.' Mustard-seed was evidently bowing before Bottom.

21-22. *Cavalery Cobweb*—a mistake for Pease-blossom, for Cobweb has been already sent for the honey-bag. Bottom, being new to the fairy-world, mixes up the names.

It is either Bottom's or the printer's slip. But the alliteration of 'Cavalery Cobweb' similar to that of 'Mounsieur Mustard-seed' makes it probable that the mistake is Shakespeare's. '*Cavalery*', corresponding to cavalier, chevalier, literally a horseman but generally 'a fashionable man, a gallant', is adopted from the Spanish *cavallero or cavaliero.* Bottom blunders over a word of foreign origin.

cf. The Merry Wives of Windsor—'Cavaliero Slender.'

26. Shakespeare follows the common Elizabethan belief that the weavers as a class are good musicians in attributing to Bottom, a weaver, a good ear for music.

26-27. *The tongs*—a pair of tongs played with a key or piece of iron, a rustic musical instrument something like the modern 'triangle'. The *bones*, 'flat pieces of bone held between alternate fingers and clacked together as by 'nigger minstrels in the present day.'

39-41. **Exp.** *So doth......elm*—commentators are puzzled as to the true meaning of this passage. The difficulty is solely due to the fact that Shakespeare elsewhere (II. 1. 251 and Much Ado, III. 1. 30) identifies the woodbine with the honeysuckle, the two names being interchangeably used for the same plant. But the construction here according to which 'woodbine' is the subject and 'honeysuckle' is the object of 'entwist', makes it certain that *two different plants are referred to*, the weaker woodbine entwining itself with the stronger plant, the honeysuckle; this is further confirmed by its entire correspondence in form with the next line. 'Woodbine' though commonly used as a name for the honeysuckle, here refers to the plant 'bindweed or convolvulus' (1) The idea here is that the lovely Titania entwines the robust, rugged Bottom with her soft, delicate arms as the weaker climbing plant, the

convolvulus, winds its tendrils about the robust plant, the honeysuckle, or as the ivy, like the wife clinging to the husband for support, encircles the rough elm-tree. In this connection Wright says: "The word 'entwist' seems to describe the mutual action of two climbing plants, twining about each other, and I, therefore, prefer to consider the woodbine and the honeysuckle as distinct, the former being the convolvulus, rather than to adopt a construction and interpretation which do violence to the reader's intelligence." Two other explanations have been suggested to get over the difficulty of regarding the woodbine and the honeysuckle as two different plants but they are less satisfactory. (2) Shakespeare uses 'woodbine' for the plant and 'honeysuckle' for the flower (of the same plant); but the plant cannot be said to 'entwist' the flower. (3) Honeysuckle is in apposition with woodbine, so that they are two names for the same plant. According to this idea the punctuation should be 'so doth the woodbine, the sweet honeysuckle,' etc., and 'entwist' should be either treated as an intransitive verb=twists itself or as a transitive verb governing 'fingers'. But this is unsatisfactory because only the ivy is connected with the elm, the woodbine or honeysuckle having nothing to do with it.

40. *Female ivy*—so called because it always requires the support of some stronger tree such as of the masculine elm which is practically called its husband.

41. *Enrings......fingers*—a reference to the marriage ring. The imagery of marriage is used by implication.

65. *Accidents*—incidents.

70. *Dian's bud*—the bud of the *Agnus Castus* or Chaste Tree, popularly supposed in the Elizabethan age to have the virtue of keeping men and women chaste. Wright, however,

says 'It is more probably a product of Shakespeare's imagination, which had already endued 'Cupid's flower', the Heart's Ease, with qualities not recognised in Botany.' Another view is that 'Dian's bud' is the rose, regarded as a symbol of the chastity of Elizabeth (Dian), the maiden queen. It is a compliment to the purity of the Queen which was superior to the power of Cupid (Cupid's flower). This flattery appears all the cleverer when we remember that the play was acted before the Queen.

Cupid's flower—the pansy or heart's-ease, 'love-in-idleness.' II. 1. 168.

79. *Five—i.e.*, the four Athenian lovers and Bottom.

Music, still—(1) Still or soft, subdued music which is to be louder when Oberon calls for music in l. 82. (2) Softly where 'still' is an adverb. (3) Music is to begin and then to cease before Puck speaks and then is to be renewed when Oberon exclaims 'Sound music'.

83. *Rock etc*—like a cradle.

87. *Prosperity*—this is the reading in the 1st Quarto: in the 2nd and Folios 'posterity.'

100. *Forester*—a huntsman in charge of the hounds, not a woodcutter.

101. An example of anachronism. There were no May-day festivities in Thesus's day; but Shakespeare has in mind Elizabethan England, not classical Athens.

109. *Cadmus*—the founder of Thebes. It is difficult to explain how Hippolyta could have been in Crete with Hercules and Cadmus or if there were 'bears' in Crete which is changed into 'boars' by some editors.

111. Hounds of Spartan and Cretan breed were famous in classical days and are referred to in Ovid's Metamorphoses.

113. *Fountains*—'mountains' has been suggested in place of 'fountains' on the ground that water could give no echo and that Crete is a mountainous island.

120-121. *Matched......each*—*i.e.*, Barking in harmony like a chime of bells some higher, some lower in note. Much attention was paid in Shakespeare's day to the musical quality of the cry of a pack of hounds. In selecting hounds for a pack care was taken to ensure the musical fullness and strength of a canine chorus.

136. *St. Valentine*—St. Valentine's day is February 14th on which birds were popularly believed to choose their mates for the pairing season. An example of anachronism.

137. *Wood-birds*—because these lovers have been found in the wood in couples.

160. *In fancy*—out of love.

181. *Three and three*—three men and three maids, three pairs of lovers.

Exp. 184-85. *These things.........clouds*—The night of fairy magic is over and the day has dawned with its realities. The lovers are awake and free from the influence of the love-juice. Now that they see things in their proper perspective, their recent dreams and marvellous experiences seem already to have lost all their importance and significance. The lovers already regard them as the unsubstantial shadows of a dream. Demetrius says here that the events of the night about which he was recently very definite and to which he attached so much importance during his dream, now that he is awake, appear shadowy and unsubstantial like mountains on the distant horizon which by reason of the distance appear dim, unsubstantial and indefinite like clouds. To all the victims of the fairy magic, to the Athenian lovers as well as to Bottom, the events of the night seem a dream when they are awake.

Exp. 188-89. *And I......mine own*—Helena has at last recovered Demetrius unexpectedly and is not at all sure whether she will be able to retain possession of him. She has the same feeling of insecurity of possession as a man who finding a jewel by chance is not sure whether he will have to surrender it to the rightful owner and thus lose it again. Malone says, 'Helena, I think, means to say that having *found* Demetrius *unexpectedly*, she considered her property in him as insecure as that which a person has in a jewel that he has *found* by *accident*; which he knows not whether he shall retain, and which, therefore, may properly enough be called *his own and not his own*. She does not say, as Warburton has represented, that Demetrius was *like a jewel*, but that she had *found him* like a jewel, etc.' Perhaps it is suggested by the parable of the lost treasure in Matthew, XIII, 44.

Exp. 197-213. 'Bottom awakes and regards all that has happened since his transformation as a dream. *But that he has been an ass he has no notion*, only that he has been adored by a most fair lady. Hence the irony of the situation. He would say in lines 203-205, 'Methought I was a gallant lover, and methought I had a garland on my head;' the audience know that it should be, 'Methought I was—an ass, and methought I had—an ass's nole on.'—Warwick Shakespeare. The humour of the passage lies in Bottom's unconsciousness of his transformation. This unconscious humour reaches its climax in Bottom's words 'man is but an ass'. Another view is that Bottom was vaguely conscious of his transformation. He remembers that he dreamt he was an ass with an ass's head on and is ashamed to confess it. He would be a real ass if he were to try to interpret his dream. According to this view, he would say in lines 203—205, 'Methought I was an ass and methought I had an ass's head on'.

205. *A patched fool*—a fool in a particoloured dress, a motley. The professional jester was called 'a patch' because of his parti-coloured or patched dress.

206-9. *The eye......dream was*—A very common type of humour. This fantastic inversion of words is of a piece with Bottom's characteristic malapropism ar misuse of words. This is a reference to I Corinthians, II. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' Some people argue, however, that this kind of humour was so common that it is not necessary to see in it a parody of Scripture.

213. *At her death*—at Thisbe's death as an epilogue. Theobald has suggested in place of 'at her death' 'after death' =after his death on the stage as Pyramus. After dying as Pyramus and thus finishing his part, he will sing the ballad.

SCENE II.

Summary.—Bottom has been sent for by his fellow mechanicals but to their extreme perplexity he is not to be found at home. They are in a fix, for none but Bottom with his dramatic talents could play the part of Pyramus in all Athens. Without him, their leader, they could not make their fortune by celebrating the marriage of Thesus with a theatrical. Bottom, released from the enchantment, turns up at the last moment and gives his friends final instructions for the performance. Thus Bottom is restored to his fellows and final arrangements are made for the performance of the interlude at the marriage festival.

Dramatic significance.

All the different stories which form the complex web of the plot *viz*., the fairy story, the lover's story and the Thesus story have been happily resolved. By the restoration

of Bottom to his fellows in this scene, the way is prepared for the successful conclusion of the last story, *viz.*, that of the dramatic performance as part of the marriage celebrations in the next Act. This scene leads on to the Fifth Act, 'which is all concerned with *the play within the play*, and serves as an epilogue to the main action.' Thus this scene is a connecting-link between the last scene of the play and the preceding one.

Notes, Explanations, etc.

3. *Transported*—(1) carried off by some supernatural agency, particularly by the fairies. Almost a technical word in popular superstition about witchcraft. (2) an euphemism for 'killed or murdered'.

9-10. *The best......man*—a combination of the two constructions (*a*) 'the best wit of all handicraft men' and (*b*) 'a better wit than any handicraft man'.

14. *A thing of naught*—a worthless thing. 'The ejaculation', 'God bless us' proves that Flute imagined he was saying a *naughty* word'.

22. *Sixpence......nothing*--a reward of sixpence a day as a pension for life for the playing of the part of Pyramus. Steevens thinks that there is a satirical reference to a pension of twenty pounds a year bestowed on an actor named Thomas Preston for his acting before Queen Elizabeth at Cambridge in 1564.

Enter Bottom—Immediately on his return to Athens from the wood, the play on his brain, he must have gone straight to Thesus's palace to learn whether their play has been accepted. From the palace he has hastened back to Quince's house. So he has more up-to-date information than his friends. So he is in a position to announce that their play has been 'preferred.'

31-32. *Good springs*—for fastening on their false beards so that they may not come off in the acting. *Pumps*, light shoes for dancing, 'so called because used for *pomp* or ornament.'

34. *Preferred*—submitted for approval, presented for acceptance.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Summary. 'Thesus and Hippolyta reappear, and "the lovers, full of joy and mirth" come in. The artisans perform the interlude before the court. After "the iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve," the fairies come and invoke blessings on the bridal-bed.'

Dramatic significance.

The stage has been cleared for the performance of the interlude—the only element of the play remaining to be disposed of. The plot with its four-fold action is brought to a natural and artistic conclusion : hence this scene is a happy meeting-ground of all the principal characters which figure in the four stories of the plot.

The fifth Act is a sort of epilogue to the whole play. The principal actions being finished, the performance by the mechanicals of the interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe is used as an occasion for a parody or burlesque treatment of the main theme of love. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is a tragi-comic illustration of the impetuosity of youtaful love and the consequent misfortune it brings on—the central theme of the play. This Act bears much the same relation to the rest of the play as the anti-masque does to the masque proper. The Interlude performs the function of the anti-masque because it also is a parody of the principal

theme of the play. It also gives the dramatist an opportunity for introducing some criticism on poetry and dramatic art as they appear to Thesus, the practical man.

Another happy idea is the introduction of the fairies at the end which serves a twofold purpose. It (*a*) creates at the close the atmosphere of an epithalamium or wedding-song and (*b*) emphasises what has been one of the most artistic features of the play throughout, the intimate connection between the fairy interest and the human interest of the play—thus securing a unity of interest in A Midsummer Night's Dream. But for this the play might have been ended after the performance of the interlude, *i.e.*, at line 355. Lines 378-424 partake of the nature of an epithalamium or wedding-song and have special reference to the occasion of the wedding on which the play was first performed.

Notes, Explanations, etc.

4. *Seething*—boiling, excited, overwrought.

Shaping fantasies—fancies or imaginations capable of giving concrete form and substance to things that do not exist (airy nothing)

56. *Apprehend*—conceive, imagine.

Comprehends—understands, grasps.' There are two ways of seeing: one is to comprehend, which is to see all round a thing, or to embrace it ; one is to apprehend which is to see it in part, or take hold of it'

Exp. *More strange......comprehends*—Thesus is a practical man, not impressed with the reality of imagination. He does not believe in the reality of the fairy story and therefore dismisses it as a dream, a creation of the imagination. Such quaint, fantastic stories, such absurd fairy stories as the lovers have told, which are miraculous but false, do not appeal to his realistic mind. The minds of lovers and lunatics are full of wild,

romantic fancies, their imagination creates things which have no real existence. They imagine things which are unreal and which, therefore, cannot be understood by men of ordinary reason or common understanding like Thesus.

Exp. 7—17. *The lunatic......a name*—Imagination reigns supreme in three classes of people, the madman, the lover and the poet ; it is for this that they are absolutely lacking in a sense of reality. Madness, poetic genius and love are all the outcome of imagination. The madman's fancy creates for him more devils than are to be found in the infinite regions of hell. The lover, no less wild in his fancies, imagines a dark gipsy girl as beautiful as Helen of Troy.

The poet, during his fit of inspiration, has an ecstatic vision of the whole universe, of all things in heaven and earth, conceives with the power of his imagination vividly and definitely things which never have any real, physical existence and which as such no mortal eye has ever seen and then with his magic pen gives to these aerial fancies and imaginings a concrete form and shape, a name and a dwelling place. Poetry is thus the concrete embodiment of the poet's fancies—things which exist only in the imagination of the poet, nowhere in the pysical universe.

Helen's beauty—Helen of Troy, the most beautiful woman in Greek mythology, whose beauty was responsible for the Trojan War. A Greek princess carried off in her Greek husband, Menalaus's absence by Paris, prince of Troy. She became the type of the highest beauty ever since her glorification by Marlowe in his play of Doctor Faustus.

A brow of Egypt—The dark brow or face of an Egyptian or a gipsy. A gipsy is called an Egyptian because they were supposed originally to have come from Egypt. Here the dark features of a gipsy are contrasted with the fair

complexion of Helen. The lover with his imagination sees in the swarthy features of a gipsy maid the wonderful beauty of Helen.

Exp. 23-27. *But all the story......admirable*—Hippolyta does not agree with Thesus in dismissing the lovers' experiences as merely the tricks of their fancy, the inventions of their romantic imagination. She thinks that there is more truth and reality in what they say than her husband Thesus would give them credit for. She says that the account of their experiences in all their detail and the fact of their feelings having been so strongly affected and changed all at one time prove that what they feel and say is not due to mere imagination and, however strange, has a logical consistency about it.

34. *After-supper*—the rear-supper or dessert, a course of sweet-meats, fruits, etc., served after the supper.

44. *Centaurs.*—represented in mythology as a wild and savage race, half horses and half men, inhabiting Mount Pelion in Thessaly. They are celebrated in ancient story for their fight with the Lapithae which arose at the marriage feast of Pirithous. This fight is sometimes placed in connection with a combat of Hercules with the Centaurs. Hercules was attacked by the Centaurs whom he vanquished while pursuing the Erymanthian boar.

47. *Kinsman*—According to Plutarch they were cousins.

48. *Bacchnals*—the female devotees of Dionysus, god of wine, worked up to frenzy by wine.

49. *Thracian singer*—Orpheus who lived in a cave in Thrace. 'His grief for the loss of Euriydice (his wife) led him to treat with contempt the Thracian women, who in revenge tore him to pieces after the excitement of their Bacchnalian orgies'

53-53. *The thrice..... beggary*—the allusion is supposed to help in determining the date of composition. (1) According to some, the passage refers to the death of Spenser, a learned poet who died in poverty. But the date of Spenser's death, 1599, makes it impossible that it should refer to Spenser's death unless it is supposed without any reason that the lines were inserted later on.

(2) According to others it refers to Spenser's *The Tears of the Muses*, a poem of complaints published in 1591. Shakespeare perhaps referred to those allegorical complaints of the decay of learning and neglect of literature which were fashionable in his age. But this is also open to objection. The words 'late deceased' are not appropriate seeing that there was an interval of 3 or 4 years between the date of Spenser's poem and this play. 'Satire' is not a suitable description of Spenser's poem. In Spenser's poem the Nine Muses do of course lament the decay of learning and neglect of literature in that age.

(3) It might refer to the death of the poet and prose-writer Robert Greene who was a learned man and who had died in beggary.

Muses—the goddesses of song, later presiding over the different kinds of poetry and over the arts and sciences. They were nine in number.

68. *Which......rehearsed*—Philostrate did not certainly see the play at the rehearsal, for Bottom was not available for playing the part of Pyramus. Perhaps the play was preferred before Philostrate saw it, and there was a final rehearsal at the palace after Bottom's restoration to which he is referring.

70. *Passion*—emotion.

85-86. **Exp.** *I love.....perishing*—Hippolyta is full of pity for the poor performers absolutely unskilled in the

art of acting. She does not like that they should see the play only to ridicule the players. It is no pleasant sight to her to see poor actors undertaking a task beyond their power and breaking down in the attempt. The sight of people offering services from a sense of duty and then failing in their efforts to do well is very painful to her.

89-105. **Exp.** *The kinder........to my capacity*—while Hippolyta is opposed to it out of pity for these loyal and dutiful actors' incompetence, Thesus makes out a case for the performance in spite of the artisans' want of skill. He takes an entirely different view. Thesus says that in giving thanks where they are not due they will appear all the more kind. They will be amused by the blundering attempts of the actors ; but at the same time thay will appreciate the spirit of sincere loyalty and devotion in which the play is offered. In cases where poor people like the rude mechanicals break down in their efforts to do their duty, a noble and generous mind accepts those efforts to please without any regard to the merit of the performance, *i.e.* judges it by its intention rather than by its merit. On many occasions during the royal progress learned scholars have appeared before him with the intention of welcoming him with prepared speeches but in the act of doing so have begun to feel nervous and broken off in the middle of a sentence, have got choked in the utterance of carefully studied speeches and finally have stopped altogether without presenting the address of welcome they had prepared. Yet from this very silence of those poor fellows he has gathered a welcome. He has found as much true welcome in the shyness of their timid loyalty as in the facile fluency of bold, unabashed speakers. In his opinion, therefore, love and bashful simplicity are most eloquent even though they say the fewest words to express their feelings.

91-92. *Noble respect......merit*—(1) 'If you regard it as a noble mind should, you will judge it as it *might have been*, as it was intended ('in might'), not as it actually deserves ('not merit')'. ,In might is, perhaps, an elliptical expression for *what might have been.*'

(2) 'In accepting what "poor duty" offers, noble courtesy or consideration regards the ability of the performer (might), not the merit of the performance.' Coleridge proposed the following reading:

'And what poor duty cannot do, *yet would*,
Noble respect takes it," etc.

"The difficulty here has arisen, I think, in taking 'might' in the sense of *power, ability*, rather than in the sense of *will*."—*Variorum Editor.*

93-94. *Great clerks*—an allusion to the elaborate addresses presented to Elizabeth during her royal progresses, particularly her two visits to Cambridge and Oxford in 1564 and 1566 respectively.

106. *The Prologue*—this served a twofold purpose in the Elizabethan drama. It explained the action of the play, indicating the course of the plot and also made an apology for the shortcomings of the performance.

108-17. The humour of the passage lies in the fact that the speaker reverses by mispunctuation the meaning of what he intends to say.

Rightly punctuated it would read thus:

" If we offend, it is with our good will
That you should think we come not to offend;
But with good will to show our simple skill:
That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then; we come; but in despite
We do not come: as minding to content you,
Our true inten tis all for your delight;

We are not here that you should here repent
you.
The actors are at hand ; and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know."

Pyramus and Thisbe—this interlude is based upon the story in Ovid's Metamosphoses.

137. *Ninus*—the founder of Nineveh about B. C. 2182. His wife who built the city of Babylon, erected a magrificent tomb for her husband.

146-47. Shakespeare satirises the abuse or excessive use of alliteration by the Euphuists. Shakespeare, though he himself makes a judicious use of Euphuism in his earlier comedies, yet ridicules its abuse here and there.

189. *I see, etc.*—*cf.* IV. i. 206-09.

193. *Limander*=Bottom's mistake for Leander.

Helen=Bottom's mistake for Hero, the Greek priestess of Sestos for whose love Leander, a Youth of Abydos swam across the Hellespont every night. When at last he was drowned in the storm one night, Hero perished by throwing herself upon his dead body.

Shafalus=Bottom's mistake for Cephalus.

Procrus=Bottom's mistake for Procris, wife of Cephalus, a handsome hunter, son of Hermes who was loved by Aurora, goddess of the morn, but who rejected her advances out of fidelity to his wife. But he killed his wife by accident.

206-211. **Exp.** *This is the.........excellent men*—Hippolyta is disgusted at the crudeness of the representation, at the coarse, brutal realism of the performance by the ignorant, unimaginative craftsmen. They leave absolutely nothing to the imagination of the audience. Thesus, the practical man that he is, defends it by taking a practical view of poetry which gives only half the truth about it

like his grouping together of the lover, the lunatic and the poet in an earlier passage. He says that the best of these dramatic performances is only a poor, shadowy representation ot life and the worst among them no worse (*i.e.*, not very bad) if its deficiencies are 'amended' or supplied by the imagination of the audience. Hippolyta insists that the imagination is to be supplied by the audience, not the actors (the artisans) who have none of this commodity. Thesus retorts with a joke on the vanity of the actors and the conveısation is at once changed. He says that if the audience think no less of them than they think of themselves, they will be thought of very highly, impiying thereby that the artisans think very highly of themselves as actors.

This passage is valuable as containing Shakespeare's views on the dramatic art and profession. We are reminded through Thesus that the imagination of the audience must supply the deficiency of the stage-representation. Dowden says in this connection—'To Thesus, the great man of action, the worst and the best of these shadowy representations are all one. He graciously lends himself to be amused and will not give unmannerly rebuff to the painstaking craftsmen who have so laboriously done their best to please him. But Shakespeare's mind by no means goes along with the utterance of Thesus in this instance any more than when he places in a single group the lover, the lunatic and the poet. With one principle enounced by the Duke, however, Shakespeare evidently does agree, namely, *that it is the business cf the dramatist to set the spectator's imagination to work, that the dramatist musı rather appeal to the mind's eye than to the eye of sense, and that the co-operation of the spectator with the poet is necessary.* For the method of Bottom and his company is precisely the reverse, as Gervinus has observed, of Shakes-

peare's own method. *They are determined to leave nothing to be supplied by the imagination.* Wall must be plastered; Moonshine must carry lanthorn and bush.........Shakespeare as much as says, 'If you do not approve my dramatic method of presenting fairy-land and the heroic world, here is a specimen of the rival method. You think my fairy-world might be amended. Well, amend it with your own imagination. I can do no more unless I adopt the artistic ideas of these Athenian handicraftsmen.'

A great advance has been made in the matter of accessories in the present day—convenient stage devices which were totally absent in Shakespeare's day. In those days 'audiences felt no need for such aids to illusion; their imagination instantly supplied the want. Thay saw whatever the poet required them to see—as a child sees whatever is suggested to its fancy. *Brandes.*

218. *A lion fell.........dam*—several readings and interpretations have been suggested.

(1) Neither a cruel lion, nor a lioness. That is, I am Snug the joiner. and neither a lion nor a lion's dam. In Elizabethan English 'nor' was often related to two members of a sentence, though only expressed in the latter. 'A lion fell' is the reading of the Quartos and Folios. 'Neither' has to be supplied before it. But the pause after 'fell' presents a difficulty in the way of this interpretation.

(2) 'A lion's fell or a lion-fell' (skin). According to this reading, Snug is made to say that he is only a lion's skin, being dressed up in it.

(3) 'No lion fell'. 'A' is changed into 'No' according to this reading.

(4) An ingenious suggestion is 'nam' in line 217, an archaic contraction of ne + am = am not.

230. *The lanthorn......horned moon*—there is a bad pun on *lanthorn* and *horned.*

231. As a sign that he is a cuckold. A reference to the old belief that a man whose wife was faithless to him grew a pair of horns on his head.

236-37. T*his......lanthorn*—if this lanthorn represents the moon, then the man in the moon should be inside the lanthorn. If it is otherwise, then it is the greatest error in acting. Another bantering reference to the realistic, extremely unimaginative acting of the craftsmen. Two grammatical constructions are combined (1) 'the greatest error of all', (2) 'a greater error than the rest'.

240. *In snuff*—a pun on the two meanings of 'snuff' (1) 'in snuff'=to be angry or offended at something (2) 'snuff'=the burnt-out part of the wick of a candle.

257. *Moused*—the lion tears Thisbe's mantle as a cat tears a mouse.

269. *O dainty duck!*—A term of endearment.

272. *Furies*—or Eumenides, the Avenging Deities, the daughter of Earth or of Night, were the three fearful goddesses who punished men both in this world and after death for their crimes. They were fearful winged maidens with serpents twined in their hair and blood dripping from their eyes, feared by gods and men alike.

273. *Fates*—the three inexorable goddesses who decided mortal destiny. They were Clotho who spun the thread, Lachesis who determined the length of the web of life and Atropos who cut the threads with her shears when the web was complete.

274. *Cut thread and thrum*—"An expression borrowed from weaving, the *thread* being the substance of the warp the thrum, the small tuft beyond, where it is tied. Hence, metaphorically, the good and bad together."

275. *Quail*=quell=kill, des roy.

280. *Deflower'd*—wrongly used by Bottom in the sense of 'cutting off a flower in its bloom.'

292 93. *Tongue......flight*—'Tongue' is Bottom's mistake for 'sun' or it may be a misprint.

295. *No die...... ..him*—a pun on the meaning of 'die' (singular of *dice*), an ivory cube used in gaming, on which the lowest point or 'one' is called an 'ace.' Thesus says that the word 'die' is not appropriate to Pyramus as he is only one. There is yet another pun on 'ace' (pronounced as 'ass') and 'ass' in line 300.

300. *Prove an ass*—the humour of it lies in the memory of the audience of Bottom's transformation. But Thesus misses the joke, being unaware of the transformation.

305-6. *A mote......better*—the smallest thing imaginable, an atom, will turn the balance between Pyramus and Thisbe who are so well matched and show which of them is the better actor, *i.e.*, not much to choose between the two as actors, the one being as bad as the other.

308-09. These lines (from *he for a man* to *God bless us*) are omitted in the Folios because of the statute of James I forbidding the use of God's name on the stage (passed in 1605).

309. *She means*—means to say. Theobald's emendation is 'means' which is unnecessary.

Videlicet—'you may see'.

316-18. *These lily......cheeks*—the epithets are made intentionally absurd.

322. *Sister Three*—the three Fates. 'Clotho who held the distaff; Lachesis who spun the thread of life; Atropos who cut it.'

326. *Shore*—used for 'shorn' for the sake of rhyme

337-38. The irrepressible Bottom who in his role of Pyramus ought to be lying dead connot resist the temptation to show off his wisdom by setting somebody right. 'Wall cannot help in the burying of the dead, since it is down'.

338. *Epilogue*—Puck's speech at the close of the play does sound like an epilogue, though Bottom's would have been altogether differant

Bergomask dance—a rustic, clownish dance such as was common among the people of Bergamo, a town in Italy.

349. *Fairy time*—time for the fairies to be abroad and have their frolic.

352 *Palpable—grows*—so gross or coarse and crude that everyone can see its carseness and crudeness.

357—376. 'The exquisite poetry of this passage comes in striking contrast to the rude mirth of the burlesque that has preceded it,'

369. *By the triple Hecate's team*—by the side of the chariot of Hecate known under three forms—Luna in heaven Diana on earth and Hecate or Proserpina in hell.

380. *This ditty*—this song which has apparently been lost.

382. *Your song*—According to Johnson, this song is not the same as the ditty of line 380. There were two songs, both lost, the first sung by Oberon's attendants, the second by Titania's.

388-89—A reference to the ancient custom, that formed part of English marriage—ceremonies, of blessing the bridal—bed.

'*A Midsummer-Night's Dream* makes the impression of having been written in honour of the marriage of some great noble, in which case the bridal blessings with which it closes were doubtless intended to have more than a merely dramatic significance' (Boas).

390. *Create*—created. An example of the omission of—ed in the past participle. Cf. '*Consecrate* below'

396. *Hare lip*—a kind of cleft in the upper lip like that of the hare. That fairies bestowed good or evil qualities on a child at birth was a common belief in mediaeval fairy tales.

404-405. These lines are accidentally transposed in the Quartos and the Folios.

408—15. **Exp.** *If we shadows.......... will mend*—Puck here, speaking what is virtually an epilogue, makes an apology to the audience for the imperfections of the 'play and its representation, especially the improbability of the fairy-story. If the spirits and fairies have shocked their sense of truth and probability, they have only to imagine that the play is but a dream. Everything will appear to be natural if it is imagined that all the events have happened in a dream during sleep, that all these incidents are the unsubstantial images and fancies of a dream. So this fanciful play is not to be judged by the rigid laws of the real world. Shakespeare here insists on the *dream*—like, fanciful and symbolical character of the play.

Dream—an allusion to the title of the play.

420. *The Puck*—originally a general name for a fairy, not the name of a particular fairy.

419. *Serpent's tongue*—hissing which the actors get for a bad play.

422. *Your hands*—your applause, clapping of hands.

Chuf on
Beans